This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

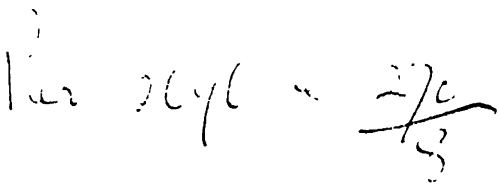
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

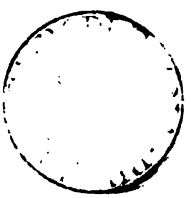
Digitized by Google

THE

NATIONAL REVIEW.

VOL. VIII.

JANUARY AND APRIL 1859.



LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
MDCCCLIX.

Digitized by Google

LONDON:
PRINTED BY ROBSON, LEVEY, AND FRANKLYN,
Great New Street and Fetter Lane.

Digitized by Google

THE NATIONAL REVIEW.

CONTENTS OF N°. XV.—JANUARY 1859.

ART. PAGE

I.—CRABBE 1

Life and Poems of the Rev. George Crabbe. New Edition. London: John Murray, 1853.

II.—THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CATHERINE II. . . . 32

Mémoires de l'Impératrice Catherine II; écrits par elle-même, et précédés d'une Préface par A. Herzen. Londres: Trübner et Cie, 1859.

La France ou l'Angleterre? Variations Russes sur le thême de l'Attentat du 14 janvier. Par Iscander (A. Herzen). Londres: Trübner et Cie, 1858.

A Handbook of the principal Families in Russia. Originally written in French by Prince Paul Dolgorouky; translated into English, with Annotations and an Introduction, by F. Z. London: James Ridgway, 1858.

III.—THE RESULTS OF SHORT IMPRISONMENTS . . . 64

Suggestions for the Repression of Crime, contained in Charges delivered to Grand Juries of Birmingham, supported by additional Facts and Arguments. By Matthew Davenport Hill. Parker and Son. 1857.

Judicial Statistics of 1857 (England and Wales). Eyre and Spottiswoode. 1858.

IV.—VIRGIL AND HIS MODERN CRITICS 84

P. Vergilii Maronis Opera,—The Works of Virgil,—with a Commentary by John Conington, M.A., Professor of Latin in the University of Oxford. London: Whitaker.

V.—COUNT MIOT DE MELITO AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION 112

Mémoires du Comte Miot de Melito, ancien Ministre, Ambassadeur, Conseiller d'Etat, et Membre de l'Institut. Three vols. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères. 1858.

VI.—FALSE MORALITY OF LADY NOVELISTS . . . 144

Mildred Vernon: a Tale of Parisian Life in the last days of the Monarchy. Colburn, 1848.

Léonie Vermont: a Scene of our Time. Bentley, 1849.

Kathie Brande. By Holme Lee. Smith and Elder, 1850.

Ruth: a Novel. By the Author of "Mary Barton." Chapman and Hall, 1853.

Framleigh Hall. Hurst and Blackett, 1858.

Digitized by Google

ART. PAGE

VII.—THE RELIGION OF THE WORKING CLASSES . . 167

Lectures and Addresses on Literary and Social Topics (chiefly addressed to Working Men). By the late Rev. Frederick W. Robertson, M.A., of Brighton. London: Smith and Elder, 1858.

English Hearts and English Hands, or the Railway and the Trenches. By the Author of "Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars." London: Nisbet, 1858.

The Pilgrim's Progress; with a Memoir of John Bunyan. New Edition. Griffin.

Chartism, and Past and Present. By Thomas Carlyle. New Edition. Chapman and Hall, 1858.

The Purgatory of Suicides: a Prison Rhyme, in Ten Books. By Thomas Cooper, the Chartist. New Edition. Holyoake and Co., 1858.

Blundering Theology: Plain Words addressed to Mr. Thomas Cooper; with Notes and Comments on his recent Lectures and Sermons in Newcastle. By George Lucas, 1858.

Confessions of Joseph Barker, a Convert from Christianity. Holyoake and Co., 1858.

VIII.—LONGFELLOW 198

Poems. By Henry W. Longfellow. Bogue, 1851.

The Song of Hiawatha. By H. W. Longfellow. Bogue, 1851.

The Prose Works of H. W. Longfellow. Bogue, 1851.

The Courtship of Miles Standish and other Poems. By H. W. Longfellow. Kent and Co., 1858.

IX.—MANSEL'S LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT . . 209

The Limits of Religious Thought examined, in Eight Lectures preached before the University of Oxford, in the year 1858, on the Foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton, M.A., Canon of Salisbury. By Henry Longueville Mansel, B.D., Reader in Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy at Magdalen College; Tutor and late Fellow of St. John's College. London: Murray, 1858.

X.—PARLIAMENTARY REFORM 228

On the Electoral Statistics of the Counties and Boroughs in England and Wales during the Twenty-five Years from the Reform Act of 1832 to the Present Time. By William Newmarch, one of the Honorary Secretaries of the Statistical Society. Read before the Statistical Society, 16th June 1857, and printed in the Journal of that Society. Vol. XX. Parts II. and III.

BOOKS OF THE QUARTER SUITABLE FOR READING-SOCIETIES 274

Digitized by Google

THE NATIONAL REVIEW.

CONTENTS OF No. XVI.—APRIL 1859.

ART. PAGE

I.—Sir E. B. Lytton, Novelist, Philosopher, and Poet 279

The Novels and Romances of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. 20 vols. London: Routledge and Co. 1858.
What will he do with it? 4 vols. Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons. 1859.
The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. 5 vols. London: Chapman and Hall.

II.—Mommsen's History of Rome 313

Römische Geschichte von Theodor Mommsen. Erster Band: Bis zur Schlacht von Pydna. Leipzig, 1854. Zweiter Band: Von der Schlacht von Pydna bis auf Sullas Tod. Berlin, 1855. Dritter Band: Von Sullas Tode bis zur Schlacht von Thapsus. Berlin, 1856. [Roman History, by Theodore Mommsen. 3 vols. Leipzig and Berlin, 1854-6.]
The Earliest Inhabitants of Italy: from Theodore Mommsen's History of Rome. Translated by George Robertson, with a Preface by Dr. Schmitz. London, 1858.

III.—Social Innovators and Reformers 339

Social Innovators and their Schemes. By William Lucas Sargant. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1858.
1848. Historical Revelations: inscribed to Lord Normanby. By Louis Blanc. London: Chapman and Hall, 1858.
An Outline of the various Social Systems and Communities which have been founded on the Principle of Coöperation. London: Longmans, 1844.
Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet: an Autobiography. By the Author of "Yeast," &c. Third edition. London: Chapman and Hall, 1852.
Self-help by the People: History of Coöperation in Rochdale. By George Jacob Holyoake. London: Holyoake and Co., 1858.

IV.—The present State of Photography 365

A Manual of Photographic Chemistry; including the Practice of the Collodion Process. By T. F. Hardwich. Fifth edition. Churchill.
The Journal of the London Photographic Society. Taylor and Francis.

V.—Mill on Liberty 393

Liberty. By John Stuart Mill. J. W. Parker, 1859.
Religious Freedom: a Lay Sermon. By Francis William Newman. Holyoake and Co. 1859.

Digitized by Google

Contents of No. XVI.

ART. PAGE

VI.—MORLEY'S MEMOIRS OF BARTHOLOMEW FAIR . . 425
Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair. By Henry Morley. Chapman and Hall, 1859.

VII.—D'AGUESSEAU AND FRENCH JURISPRUDENCE . . 441
Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages du Chancelier D'Aguesseau. Par M. A. Boullée, ancien Magistrat. Paris.
Lives of Lords Chief-Justice Mansfield and Chancellor Eldon. By Lord Chief-Justice Campbell. London.

VIII.—PEASANT LIFE IN RUSSIA 469
Récits d'un Chasseur. Par Ivan Tourgueneff. Traduits du Russe par H. Delaveau. Chez Dentre, Libraire-Editeur au Palais-Royal. Paris, 1858.
Scènes de la Vie russe. Par Ivan Tourgueneff. Traduites par M. X. Marmier. Librairie de Hachette et Cie. Paris, 1858.
Scènes de la Vie russe. Par Ivan Tourgueneff. Traduites du Russe par Louis Viardot. Deuxième Série. Librairie de Hachette et Cie. Paris, 1858.

IX.—THE TRUE DIFFICULTIES OF THE ITALIAN QUESTION 488
Farini's History of Rome from 1815 to 1850. 4 vols. London, 1851-1854.
L'Empereur Napoléon III et l'Italie. Paris, 1859.
Farini's Letter to Lord John Russell. Turin, 1859.
Mazzini's Letter to the Italian Liberals. London, 1859.

X.—SCHLEIERMACHER'S LIFE AND TIMES . . . 502
Aus Schleiermacher's Leben. In Briefen. Berlin, 1858.—Sketches of Schleiermacher's Life, from his Correspondence. 8vo. 2 vols.

XI.—PRESENT ASPECTS OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM . 538
Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform. By John Stuart Mill.
A Plea for the Constitution. By John Austin.

BOOKS OF THE QUARTER SUITABLE FOR READING-SOCIETIES 563

Digitized by Google

THE NATIONAL REVIEW.

JANUARY 1859.

ART. I.—CRABBE.

Life and Poems of the Rev. George Crabbe. New Edition. London: John Murray, 1853.

THE criticism of contemporary art cannot possibly be mature. No reader can avoid being influenced by the point of view from which he contemplates the subject of his observation. And as all art worthy of the name is, to some extent at least, permanent, it will always have a side addressed to ideas other than the prevailing ones of the time when it first appears; and where the poet is of a wider reaching imagination and insight than his critic, as every great poet almost always will be, this side will probably, for some time at least, be beyond the power of the latter to estimate, perhaps beyond his scope to perceive at all. Every new generation possesses new facilities for the estimation of a true poet. It can ascertain the judgment passed by those who have gone before; and it can bring its own new knowledge and the fresh conditions of its own position to test the permanent truthfulness, wisdom, and beauty of the poems delivered to the ears of generations gone by. The true Temple of Fame is long in building; every age reviews its proportions, adds a new stone, or tears down an unmerited decoration. Sometimes a hasty Tower of Babel soars into the skies in a brief ecstasy of popular applause, to be scattered for ever in scorn by the next comers; sometimes the moss gathers over a few well-laid stones, destined after long years to be reverentially cleared and made the foundation of a monument lasting as the heavens. The criticism of the literature of the day is, no doubt, the more immediate function of the Reviews of the day; but, even in the interests of such criticism, it is well

Digitized by Google

to secure those elements of comparison which are to be obtained by the occasional discussion of the productions of other writers than those who now first appear upon the stage. We shall treat these latter more broadly and more justly if we preserve our familiarity with those who have preceded them; and, independently of this, it can never be without interest to record how a great poet appears to each new generation of readers.

It needs no apology, then, we conceive, to our readers, that we occupy our pages with some remarks on the poetry of Crabbe; which, however little it may coincide with the modern estimate of what is most delightful in the art of verse, can yet never fail to command respect and admiration. Nor shall we scruple to refresh their memories with a brief sketch of the life and personal habits of the author; not because we have any thing to offer on this subject derived from other than the existing resources of contemporary allusion and the excellent Memoir by his son, but because it is our object rather to examine the genius of the man than to attempt to measure out exact dues of praise or blame to his productions.

Both the biography and the works of Crabbe are less widely read than they deserve to be. The poet in his lifetime enjoyed a wide popularity, which narrowed somewhat suddenly after his decease. His writings, on their first appearance, had an extensive body of readers, and gained the suffrages of the best-qualified judges of his day. Burke first distinguished his rising genius. Fox and Johnson read him with pleasure, and condescended to correct him; for a condescension it was esteemed on both sides, though corrections made under the influence of an external authority of this kind rarely fail to operate as deteriorations. Canning and Dudley North were warm in their admiration; and Wilson and Jeffreys and Gifford agreed to applaud him. Sir Walter Scott, with his open-hearted enthusiasm, extolled him as a poet and welcomed him as a friend. Both *The Borough* and *The Village*, inferior as they are to *The Tales*, found readers throughout the breadth of the land; and Mr. Murray paid him 3000*l.* for *The Tales of the Hall* and the copyright of the poems already published. But though that work too was well received, the interest in Crabbe's poetry receded so rapidly that the bargain proved more liberal than prudent on the part of the publisher. Most poets experience an ebb of reputation after it has risen to its first height; and, indeed, their fame generally partakes of a periodical rise and fall, during which some are borne higher on every succeeding wave, and others gradually stranded.

It is low tide with Crabbe just at present: the times of

Digitized by Google

late have not been favourable to the appreciation of writers of his school. He may be considered as the last great poet who made man and the lives of men the direct subject of his verse. Modern poetry has occupied itself not with men, but with the ideas, the passions, and the sentiments of men; not with their lives, and not with their characters, but with detached incidents of lives and special traits or sides of character. The concrete man and the actual life have been subordinated to, or displayed only to throw a more vivid light on, the elucidation of feelings and ideas; and often these have been simply the feelings and ideas of the poet himself. The colloquists of *The Excursion* are not very ingeniously contrived mouthpieces for the contemplative imagination and meditative genius of the author. Byron wrote to vent his own passions—his anger, his wit, his chagrin, his love of beauty; Burns is either lyrical or satirical; and Shelley, singing like his own sky-lark

> "Till all the earth and air
> With his voice is loud,"

soars like it too into a region of thin air, native to himself, but removed far away from the working-day aspects and actual arrangements of human affairs. Tennyson, with far more power than any of these of entering into other minds and sympathising with varied feeling, is perhaps still less capable of dealing with complete character. He has painted not men, but present moods, and what may be called attitudes of mind, in men. In the softness of his outlines and the richness of his colouring he is most unlike the daguerreotypist; but he is like the manipulator in his main difference from a great painter. He gives a likeness from a fixed point of view; and, though a complete likeness, yet one of only a single aspect of his subject: while a man like Rembrandt or Sir Joshua Reynolds, poring long upon a face, possesses the magic power of indicating something of the whole character in his one likeness of the countenance. Literary art for some years past, both in verse and prose fiction, has narrowed itself more and more exclusively to the exposition of the feelings and the description of nature. The thought itself which mingles in it is employed in reflecting on the influences of scenery and scrutinising the working of the heart; and character has come to mean less what a man will think and do and appear under given circumstances than what he will feel. In such a school women are of course prominent, both as writers and subject-matter. The material is that with which they are specially qualified to deal both from knowledge and inclination, and of which they themselves furnish a complex, varied, and interest-

Digitized by Google

ing part. Their conceptions, it is true, are often concrete and real; but they occupy themselves with but one-half of our nature, and always the same half. They are not alone, however; the closest observer and ablest reproducer of life and manners among modern writers wades deeper every step in the same direction. He has long been at a dead-lock in the *Virginians*, and threatens to surrender himself entirely to describing sentiment and uttering caustic and humorous sayings about sentiment. The humour of Dickens has always lain in the caricature of special traits and the exaggeration of engaging excellences; and Bulwer, tired of his old ideals, solicits a female audience, and striking boldly into the current of the day, devotes himself to the domestic affections. Modern poets are not simply lyrical; they do not utter themselves directly. They are contemplative, but contemplate themselves; they frame outward delineations, but use them as machinery for displaying the results of introspection. *Aurora Leigh* is a vivisection on the bookseller's counter; Coventry Patmore, in a poem devoted to the deification of woman, tells us how he felt during his courtship; and, to descend lower, Alexander Smith and Gerald Massey, as they have the less command of external resources, are all the more assiduous in digging in their own natures.

It may be questioned, however, whether a reaction be not at hand. At any rate, we think the world of readers is ripe for it, if any writer shall be found powerful enough to raise the standard of revolt. War has shaken up the energies of the nation; and we should not be surprised if it and some other influences should be found potent to disperse the too exclusive devotion to the affections which has long distinguished English art.

Should our poetry turn to contemplate the more practical and every-day aspects of human life,—should it turn, we mean, from the passions and sentiments on which life revolves to the activities in which it is spent; should it take to scanning moralities rather than feelings, and doings rather than contemplations,—it is probable that Crabbe will gain some meed of real attention more valuable than the uninformed acquiescence in eulogy which is pretty universally conceded to him.

He was born in the year 1754, at Aldborough on the coast of Suffolk. The scene of his birth and early life left an indelible impression on his mind and genius. It was in those days a rude village on the eastern coast, and combined much that is most repulsive in aspect and scenery with that particular picturesqueness, and to some minds even charm, which is often to be found in such situations. The coast for miles is

Digitized by Google

a long line of rounded flint shingle, edged at low tide with a narrow belt of sand; on it the waves of the German Ocean, which has an air of grimness and inhospitality beyond most other seas, beat with an irresistible force, and make yearly conquests from the land. Sometimes on the wild winter nights the pilots and fishermen throng the beach, the anxious women clustering round them, and, powerless to carry aid across the curled and grating surges, witness with gloomy eyes the hopeless driving of some dimly-discerned vessel, whose gleaming lights express the terrors of the hapless wretches on board; and sometimes the danger comes nearer home, and the raging billows, rushing beyond their limits, sweep away whole rows of cottages and plant the sea among their ruins. In a small and gloomy house with overhanging upper story, which has since thus perished, the poet was born.

The Ald, a navigable stream, passes by the little town, but does not there debouch into the sea. Turning southward, it runs parallel to the shore for several miles. The strip that for this distance separates it from the sea is waste and marshy, and the aspect of the whole rural district around is bare and poverty-stricken. It has been described by the poet himself, in lines to whose force and minuteness nothing can be added:

> "Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
> Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;
> From thence a length of burning sand appears,
> Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;
> Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
> Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye.
> There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
> And to the ragged infant threaten war;
> There poppies nodding, mock the hope of toil;
> There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
> Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf
> The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
> O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
> And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade:
> With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
> And a sad splendour vainly shines around."

The inhabitants of this district were half peasants half smugglers, and the town itself was almost exclusively occupied by seafaring men, some of whom lived by the ocean and drew up their fishing and pilot boats on the beach, and others were employed in the inland traffic which passed up and down the river. A strong tide comes up the broad channel of the Ald to the town, and receding, leaves the muddy banks exposed:

> "Here samphire-banks and saltwort bound the flood,
> There stakes and seaweeds withering on the mud;
> And higher up a ridge of all things base,
> Which some strong tide has rolled upon the place."

Digitized by Google

On this river is Slaughden Quay; and here, in his father's warehouse, the young Crabbe was compelled to roll the cheeses and pile the butter; duties harshly, but perhaps not unreasonably, imposed upon him while awaiting an opening for other occupation. His father was salt-master and a leading man in the little borough, though scarcely raised in social standing above the fishermen around him. But he was a man of vigorous mind and strong passions, fond of mathematical problems and a reader of Milton, subject to fits of gloom and anger, and though himself attached to his children, ruling them with a sway that made fear predominant over love in their minds. George's inaptitude in handling the tiller or the sheet called forth many a coarse and harsh rebuke; but his father had sense to see the boy's superior mental qualifications, and strained his means to afford him the best education in his power. But not much time could be devoted to this object. He was destined for a surgeon, and at the age of thirteen first entered on his apprenticeship. He learned something of what may be learned by reading, and was specially attracted to the study of botany; but he made no progress in what men gain by practice; and when, after some years, he attempted to establish himself in Aldborough, the sense of his incompetency, and the idea that he might at any moment be called on in some case requiring experience and manual dexterity, made him miserable. His musing habits inspired no confidence, and an active rival engrossed the little occupation there was. He himself declared that he turned to verse as a last resource for a livelihood. This is not altogether so, as from his boyhood he seems to have loved to express his feelings and ideas in rhyme; but there is no doubt that the severity of his needs turned that into a systematic study which had otherwise perhaps only been an occasional recreation. He had a strong active mind; he found he could turn a verse as well as another; he liked the exercise, and had studied it; others had lived by it, he conceived he might do the same. His professional prospects were hopeless, his dislike to the rude manners of those around him excessive; and after long and anxious meditation, he resolved to give up the struggle to live as a surgeon, and to commit himself to the frail resources of a literary career in London. With a stock of his best verses, and three pounds in money, he sailed in the forecastle of a sloop for the metropolis. This was in the spring of 1780.

There is no nobler instance of untiring industrious perseverance and cheerful fortitude than that displayed by Crabbe during his first year in London. Melancholy and misery at times no doubt laid heavy hands upon him; but his was

Digitized by Google

not the spirit to yield to the gloomy despair of Chatterton. His endurance was based on a simple but deeply-felt piety, which no disappointments could shake or even obscure; and his spirits were supported by the steady attachment and lively spirits of his future wife. This was a Miss Elmy, a lady of some little higher social position than himself, and the niece of a Mr. Tovell, one of the old race, who, with an estate of some 800*l.* a year, called himself yeoman, and dined in his kitchen at the head of his domestics and labourers, while his wife shared the labours of the farm and scrubbed the floor of the best apartment. Crabbe, who had made their acquaintance when surgeon's apprentice in the neighbourhood, had to bear many a rude jeer on his assumption of gentility and acquaintance with "the damned learning;" but he was well rewarded by securing the affections of the niece, whose sprightly letters and never-failing sympathy helped to support him through the lingering disappointments of his year of trial in London. How he lived is a mystery. He seems to have had no resource except that of pawning his surgical instruments and his little stock of books. But his wants were few, and he entirely escaped those shiftless and dissipated habits into which men in his situation have so often been betrayed. For society he consorted with a few sober-minded young mathematicians, who met at a little coffee-house near the Exchange; and for recreation he walked to Highgate or Hornsey, and read Horace or Catullus in the country. His industrious days were devoted to the manufacture, remodelling, and writing out of poems. Bookseller after bookseller refused them; and when at last he succeeded in obtaining the publication of *The Candidate*, this single ray of hope was extinguished by the failure of the publisher. It was a time when literature was shaking itself free from dependence on individual patronage, and learning to rely upon the wider and more wholesome approbation of the general public. But Crabbe, unable to obtain the opportunity of submitting himself to the world, unwillingly sought the protection of a patron. And now his troubles found an end; for after enduring his share of those slights and neglects which are the unavoidable stings of such a pursuit, and when on the eve of arrest for a debt of a few pounds, he was happy enough to be appreciated by one whose praise was an honourable distinction, and the nobleness of whose nature made his benefits at once large and easy to be borne. Edmund Burke approved his poetry, made him the inmate of his house, and charged himself with the advance of his fortunes. Crabbe sat at his table, not like a tolerated client, but like a distinguished guest, and was introduced on equal terms to the best and most distinguished

Digitized by Google

friends of his host. The politician in the hot turmoil of party life found time to stimulate and direct the poetical activities of the young author; and, stamped by his approval, *The Library* found a publisher in Mr. Dodsley, and gained applause from the circle of critics. Mr. Crabbe's son justly remarks, that the cultivation of his mind and the propriety of his manners must have been much above what could reasonably have been anticipated from the opportunities he had heretofore enjoyed, to give him at once so firm a hold upon the esteem and regard of such a man as Burke. It is clear that he required only to be known to gain the respect and regard of those with whom he came in contact. The kindness of Sir Joshua Reynolds called forth the warm and grateful feelings of the young adventurer. At his table he met Dr. Johnson, and the great literary dictator patted him on the head in his gloomy and solemn fashion. To Lord Chancellor Thurlow he had before applied in vain, and had expressed his disappointment in some reproachful verses. The surly dispenser of church patronage now asked him to breakfast. "I ought to have noticed, sir," said he, "the first poem you sent me, and I heartily forgive the second." He pressed a hundred-pound note into his hand, and gave him promises of future assistance when he should have taken orders: for a way was now opened for Crabbe to gratify what had been an old predilection, and to enter into the ministry of the church. And deficient as he doubtless was in the education appropriate to such an office, he had at least the qualifications of an unblemished life and a devotional spirit, to which he added sound sense and considerable general cultivation of mind; though his knowledge, as is common with men who have not been regularly educated, or afterwards mingled in the world, was limited in many directions by walls of complete ignorance; and with all his native intelligence and activity of mind, he cannot but have been deficient in that sort of culture which can only be gained by early and continuous intercourse with refined and educated society. He was admitted to orders, and returned to Aldborough as curate to the rector of that place; but remained there only a short time, having been received as the domestic chaplain of the Duke of Rutland on the recommendation of Burke. Treated with all courtesy, he has yet left unmistakable evidence in his poems that the restraints imposed and the observance required by such a position were galling to a spirit for which freedom and independence had a more than ordinary charm. Personally the duke and duchess treated him with a consideration and regard which left an ineffaceable impression; but they could not alter the received conditions of his position. The chaplain of that day had risen

Digitized by Google

far beyond his predecessor of a hundred years back. He was no longer a more or less privileged menial. Theoretically Crabbe was the equal of the titled and distinguished guests that thronged the ducal apartments of Belvoir, practically he was made sensible of a perpetual condescension: it was for those around him to choose the degree of intimacy to which he was to be admitted; it was for him to discharge his functions in the appointed routine, to furnish his society when it was wished for, and to withdraw from the conversation when it passed the conventional limits of clerical toleration. All this was not much to honest unsophisticated Mr. Crabbe's taste, nor had his life fitted him to move with ease in the scenes around him. He played his part as well as he could among the splendid hospitalities of the castle; but was never so happy as when he could find opportunity, in the less formal life at the duke's more retired residences, to escape into solitude, and add to his collection of plants or ruminate over some additional verses.

In the year 1783 he published *The Village*. It was corrected by Johnson and Burke, and gained very considerable applause. Soon after he married the object of his long and faithful attachment, and spent the next few years in a curacy in the neighbourhood of Belvoir. In 1785 he published *The Newspaper*, which also was well received; much better, indeed, than it deserved.

It was twenty-two years before he again appeared in print. This time was spent in complete retirement from the world in different country parishes in Leicestershire and Suffolk. We do not propose to write a biography, but a criticism; and the incidents of a man's life after he has attained to maturity seldom afford much additional evidence as to his character. In the early part of a man's career we study how events and circumstances have acted on him; in the later part our attention is turned to the influence he himself has had upon affairs. This at least is the ordinary rule; and as Mr. Crabbe himself underwent no marked change or further development of character, and never mixed in any matters of external importance, it will be sufficient to sum up very briefly the remaining incidents of his life. In 1807 he published *The Parish Register*, the perusal of which in manuscript beguiled some of the last hours of Fox. In 1810 appeared *The Borough*, and in 1812 *The Tales in Verse*. After the death of his wife,—a loss he felt most acutely,—Mr. Crabbe moved, in 1814, from his rectory of Muston in Leicestershire to the living of Trowbridge in Wiltshire. Henceforward, after some thirty years of seclusion, he began again to mix somewhat in the world, visited London, and was caressed and fêted by the literary world of Holland

Digitized by Google

House. In 1819 appeared *The Tales of the Hall;* and he who had made his first efforts under the auspices of Burke and Johnson, now reappeared as the literary contemporary of Moore and Campbell. They and Mr. Rogers made much of the old gentleman. We have all seen such men of the past times, and know how they are received. The men respect them for past services, and yield them a cheerful half-ironic deference; the women adore them, especially if they wear that air of antiquated gallantry for which Mr. Crabbe was conspicuous. Those who gain a reflected importance from knowing them, worship them with unaffected zeal. Mr. Crabbe's shrewd sense, simplicity, and old-world courtesy left a pleasant impression wherever he went. He passed some agreeable time in London more than once, and extended his journeys as far as Edinburgh, where he received a cordial welcome from his warm and genuine admirer Sir Walter Scott.

Meanwhile his long and active life sloped gently to its setting. His two sons were both married and settled in the church; and the domestic affections, which were strong within him, found resources in their children and homes. His mind throughout life had been ceaselessly active: he scarcely knew such a thing as rest except in the form of change of employment. Not poetry alone, but various other forms of literary effort, had been made the subjects of his unremitting industry. Works on botany, novels, sermons, and theological works, had been written, and many of them unsparingly committed to the flames. His intellect continued bright and occupied to the last; and he left a volume of poems for posthumous publication, which, however, bears marked traces of the slackening influence of years. He died in the year 1832, at the age of seventy-eight; and deep and sincere was the mourning caused by his loss, not only among his own parishioners, but among all the inhabitants—Churchmen and Dissenters alike—of the town of Trowbridge. "Poor Mr. Crabbe," said a very juvenile female parishioner, "never go up with white head in pulpit any more." Never any more.

It is a common, almost a universal idea, that a love of beauty is essential to the character of a poet. Some have even gone so far as to make this passion the basis of their theories of his art. It is obvious that a classification thus grounded goes far to exclude some branches which universally accepted language has always comprehended within the name of poetry. It is difficult to see the beauty of satire and epigram; it is not very precise to ascribe that quality to wit or humour; yet no restrictions of the theorist can avail to put Butler, Dryden,

Digitized by Google

and Pope out of the category of poets. Crabbe presents difficulties still greater to the prevalent ideas on this subject. His position is perhaps more anomalous than that of any other English poet; yet few, if any, will deny that he has an incontrovertible claim to the title. There is a sense in which he is the least poetical of poets; there is another in which he is one of the most so. He is the plainest of all poets,—deals the least in ornament. When he gives you a simile,—as he sometimes thinks it his duty to do,—he puts it in perspicuously, adds it ostentatiously, like a Quaker sticking a flower in his buttonhole. To a great poet metaphor is a more refined language, through which alone he can express his deeper meanings and hint his more refined ones. But Crabbe has no profound ideas, and no subtle ones. The common language of common men is abundantly sufficient to express what he has to say; and it is rarely indeed that he travels beyond it. And yet he is a poet. He is a poet, moreover, without passion, and with only a steady tempered sympathy with the affections he displays and the characters he presents in his poems. He has none of that constructive genius which turns all the things it touches into harmonious wholes, and contrives to shed a grace of external form over the veriest trifles. He has no wit and no humour; and without all this he is a poet. He is the last man to make himself, and the display of his own character, life, or feelings, the source of interest to others. He gives no voice to our profounder thoughts; he neither interprets nature, nor reproduces her aspects of beauty with that richness of colouring which is the characteristic of modern poetry. He is much further from Tennyson, Wordsworth, Burns, Byron, and Keats, than any one of these poets is from another. In the plainness and commonplaceness of his ideas and language, in his absence of passion and profound insight, in his total disregard of beauty, Crabbe was no poet. Some will say nothing remains to make him one. We say, on the contrary, that he had in a high degree the one essential quality which all poets must have in common; and that those things in which we have marked him as deficient, important and valuable as they are, are the accidents, not the essentials, of poetry. He had imagination. That man is a poet (though there may be no limit to his poverty and triteness) who takes up into the receptive imagination any matter whatever, and reproduces it in language under any of those rhythmical conditions which are accepted as forms of verse. There is no limit to this definition. A train of argument is not poetry; and if there be such a thing as a man arriving at logical conclusions in rhyme, he is not making poetry. But a man who gives a metrical form to a conceived train of thought (as

Digitized by Google

Dryden in the *Religio Laici*) is writing poetry; and he who describes in the barest words the very commonest object he has once seen and formed a concrete idea of, is an artist and, if he uses verse, a poet; he is a poet, that is, by definition. To be a great poet, indeed to be a poet at all in the higher sense in which we usually employ the term, a man must have a creative imagination: he must be able to make some new thing out of those impressions which he has received, — to "body forth the shapes of things unseen," and by the fire of his genius to fuse and transmute into new forms the results of his experience, his insight, and his intuition.

It is imagination that constitutes the poet; and one half of imagination consists in the power to form vivid mental conceptions of the things which do exist; in the power of gathering in a harvest of one's own from the external world. It is the high, the almost unexampled degree in which Crabbe possesses this power which gives him his place as a poet. He has little of the true creative power; he is only just removed from an actual transcriber; but he has a wealth of materials, a treasury of exact conceptions of existing things, which goes far to compensate a want of ingenuity in framing things new. We have spoken of the receptive imagination, and this adjective indicates the nature of the faculty in most minds; it is generally to a great extent passive, and partakes of the nature of a mirror in which the images of outer things are reflected. But in some men it is a more active and aggressive power; and this was particularly the case with Crabbe. His was a grasping tenacious imagination. Little Hartley Coleridge would have called it a "catch-me-fast" faculty. He was a man of keen observation, but also something farther; he did more than see things; he laid fast hold of them, and held them up as it were to himself for contemplation; cast a vivid light on them; and when he gave them forth again, he gave not the crude fact, but the impression he had taken of it. If he did not transmute experience into poetry, he yet did something more than simply translate it into verse.

He has not, indeed, that power which Giorgione among painters possesses in so high a degree, of making the image of an outward thing wear and express the mood of the artist's own mind; as where he steeps in sadness, and almost in despair, the picture of a man playing, and two women singing, seated on the grass. Such an artist is like one who moulds gold, and stamps his own image on it; but Crabbe uses, as it were, his own mind for the material, and stamps images of the external world on it. Every work of art is part gathered from the external world, part the artist's own. In the first case we have

Digitized by Google

cited, the artist shows himself in the superscription he leaves on his material; in the latter, he shows himself in the sort of substance in which the work is done. And this comparison of Crabbe's productions to a piece of metal bearing a defined impress may serve to contrast him also with another class of poetical minds. Some imaginations are like a sheet of clear water, in whose bosom is reflected the landscape around it and the sky above. As the water itself is part of the scene, so the man's nature seems to mingle with and be part of all that he conceives; and all things around him lean over him, and leave their shapes mirrored within him with softened wavering outlines, like the trees and towers in the lake, which partly seem watery images, and partly the water seems an inverted picture of the land. If the nature be deep and pure, and broad enough, such an imagination is great indeed; but if it be easily ruffled, or clouded, or small, it reflects but evanescent patches of truth and loveliness. Other minds,—and of such was Crabbe's,—have metal imaginations; the man himself takes hold of a thing as it were, and himself stamps it on the cold and hard but still receptive and tenacious material. The image remains, sharp, distinct, lasting; but rigid, colourless, and detached; and bearing with it in the very substance in which it is impressed an indisseverable and unmistakable evidence of the poet's own nature.

Crabbe has nothing of the fiery and alert imagination. He cannot "turn and wind a fiery Pegasus;" but drives a steady unwinged horse at an even trot from period to period. His genius is no swift sparkling brook or broad shining river hastening through scenes of beauty to the sea; but is like the stream familiar to his childhood, rolling placidly and somewhat heavily along between its banks, laden with the common things appertaining to common men—hoys and brigantines and trading sloops.

Yet a strong imagination he undoubtedly had; and, what seems singular in looking at his writings, a musing temperament and a retiring nature. In reading Crabbe, one would naturally draw the conclusion that he had studied men from very close acquaintance with individuals, and had consorted with them much and familiarly. It is clear, however, that this was by no means the case. It is clear that he was never much at home in the society of others,—even the poor of his own parish; that he loved best to be alone with his own pursuits. He observed men closely; but it was as an outside spectator. "The author-rector," says his son, "is in all points the similitude of Mr. Crabbe himself, except in the subject of his lucubrations:"

Digitized by Google

"Then came the *author-rector:* his delight
Was all in books; to read them, or to write:
Women and men he strove alike to shun,
And hurried homeward when his tasks were done:
Courteous enough, but careless what he said,
For points of learning he reserved his head;
And when addressing either poor or rich,
He knew no better than his cassock which;
He, like an osier, was of pliant kind,
Erect by nature, but to bend inclined;
Not like a creeper, falling to the ground,
Or meanly catching on the neighbours around:—
Careless was he of surplice, hood, and band,
And kindly took them as they came to hand;
Nor, like the doctor, wore a world of hat,
As if he sought for dignity in that;
He talk'd, he gave, but not with cautious rules,
Nor turned from gipsies, vagabonds, or fools.
It was his nature, but they thought it whim,
And so our beaux and beauties turned from him."

When he was a boy, he did not mingle in the sports and occupations of those of his own age, but neglected school and playground alike for occupations and pleasures which indicate very clearly the peculiar character of his genius. He lived a life of the imagination as truly as any other young poet has done; but his was not an imagination which could feast on its own dreams or soar unaided in the skies. It renewed its vigour by the touch of earth; it required a constant contact with reality, and sought an ever-fresh excitement in the transactions of men and the changes of nature.

"I sought the town, and to the ocean gave
My mind and thoughts, as restless as the wave;
Where crowds assembled, I was sure to run,
Heard what was said, and mused on what was done;
Attentive listening in the moving scene,
And often wondering what men could mean.
When ships at sea made signals of their need,
I watched on shore the sailors, and their speed:
Mix'd in their act, nor rested till I knew
Why they were call'd, and what they were to do.

Whatever business in the port was done,
I, without call, was with the busy one;
Not daring question, but with open ear
And greedy spirit ever bent to hear.

To me the wives of seamen loved to tell
What storms endanger'd men esteemed so well;
What wondrous things in foreign parts they saw,
Lands without bounds, and people without law.
No ships were wreck'd upon that fatal beach,
But I could give the luckless tale of each;
Eager I look'd, till I beheld a face
Of one disposed to paint their dismal case;

Digitized by Google

Who gave the sad survivor's doleful tale,
From the first brushing of the mighty gale
Until they struck; and, suffering in their fate,
I long'd the more they should its horrors state:
While some, the fond of pity, would enjoy
The earnest sorrows of the feeling boy.
* * * * * *
I often rambled to the noisy quay,
Strange sounds to hear, and business strange to me;
Seamen and carmen, and I know not who,
A lewd, amphibious, rude, contentious crew—
Confused as bees appear about their hive,
Yet all alert to keep their work alive.
Here unobserved, as weed upon the wave,
My whole attention to the scene I gave;
I saw their tasks, their toil, their care, their skill,
Led by their own and by a master-will;
And though contending, toiling, tugging on,
The purposed business of the day was done."

In the shop of the craftsman, by the inn fireside, with the shepherds on the heath, even at the smugglers' hut betwèen the rocks, the observant curious boy was to be found; and in lines more full of poetic feeling than are common in his writings, he describes his companionship with nature: though here too he does not leave without a witness, as in his reference to the salt *taste* of the spray, his fondness for the recording of minute observations:

" I loved to walk where none had walked before,
About the rocks that ran along the shore;
Or far beyond the sight of men to stray,
And take my pleasure when I lost my way;
For then 'twas mine to trace the hilly heath,
And all the mossy moor that lies beneath:
Here had I favourite stations, where I stood
And heard the murmurs of the ocean-flood,
With not a sound beside, except when flew
Aloft the lapwing or the gray curlew,
Who with wild notes my fancied power defied,
And mock'd the dreams of solitary pride.

I loved to stop at every creek and bay
Made by the river in its winding way,
And call to memory—not by marks they bare,
But by the thoughts that were created there.

Pleasant it was to view the sea-gulls strive
Against the storm, or in the ocean dive
With eager scream, or when they dropping gave
Their closing wings to sail upon the wave:
Then, as the winds and waters raged around,
And breaking billows mix'd their deafening sound,
They on the rolling deep securely hung,
And calmly rode the restless waves among.

Digitized by Google

Nor pleased it less around me to behold,
Far up the beach, the yesty sea-foam rolled;
Or, from the shore upborne, to see on high
Its frothy flakes in wild confusion fly:
While the salt spray that clashing billows form,
Gave to the taste a feeling of the storm.

Thus, with my favourite views, for many an hour
Have I indulged the dreams of princely power;
When the mind wearied by excursions bold,
The fancy jaded and the bosom cold,
Or when those wants that will on kings intrude,
Or evening-fears, broke in on solitude;
When I no more my fancy could employ,
I left in haste what I could not enjoy,
And was my gentle mother's welcome boy."

The fact is, the opportunities possessed by Crabbe for the study of life and character were, both from circumstance and temperament, much narrower than any one would conceive who judged from his writings. And thus he was in reality thrown more upon his imagination than we are apt to suppose. If he did not use it to create, he necessarily fell back upon it to piece out true conceptions from the hints which fell in his way. Like Professor Owen constructing a mastodon from a tooth, he employed himself in making out character from the casual traits which came under his notice. Invention in poetry is a cooler word of our forefathers for what we call creation; but, used in its etymological sense, it would serve well to describe Crabbe's mode of working. Observation was his ruling passion, and he carried into poetry exactly the same habits and indulged the same tastes as in natural history. In both alike he was intolerant of system and careless of inductions. The Vicar of *The Tales of the Hall*, contradictory as the descriptions may seem in some respects, is no less like him than the Author-Rector of *The Parish Register:*

"The Vicar's self, still further to describe,
Was of a simple but a studious tribe;
He from the world was distant, not retired,
Nor of it much possess'd nor much desired:
Grave in his purpose, cheerful in his eye,
And with a look of frank benignity.
He lost his wife when they together passed
Years of calm love, that triumph'd to the last.
He much of nature, not of man, had seen,
Yet his remarks were often shrewd and keen;
Taught not by books t' approve or to condemn,
He gain'd but little that he knew from them;
He read with reverence and respect the few,
Whence he his rules and consolations drew;
But men and beasts, and all that lived or moved,
Were books to him; he studied them and loved.

Digitized by Google

He knew the plants in mountain, wood, or mead;
He knew the worms that on the foliage feed;
Knew the small tribes that 'scape the careless eye,
The plant's disease that breeds the embryo fly;
And the small creatures who on bark or bough
Enjoy their changes, changed we know not how;
But now th' imperfect being scarcely moves,
And now takes wing and seeks the sky it loves.

He had no system, and forebore to read
The learned labours of th' immortal Swede;
But smiled to hear the creatures he had known
So long were now in class and order shown,
Genus and species."

In one of his letters he describes and defends his immediate dependence upon the realities with which he came in contact:

"Yes, I will tell you readily about my creatures, whom I endeavoured to paint as nearly as I could and dared; for in some cases I dared not. This you will readily admit; besides, charity bade me be cautious. Thus far you are correct, there is not one of whom I had not in my mind the original; but I was obliged in some cases to take them from their real situations, in one or two instances to change even the sex, and in many the circumstances. The nearest to real life was the proud ostentatious man in *The Borough*, who disguises an ordinary mind by doing great things; but the others approach to reality at greater or less distances. Indeed, I do not know that I could paint merely from my own fancy; and there is no cause why we should. Is there not diversity sufficient in society? and who can go, even but a little, into the assemblies of our fellow-wanderers from the way of perfect rectitude, and not find characters so varied and so pointed that he need not call upon his imagination?"

The curious point is, as we have said, that these life-portraits were drawn, not from close association with the originals, but from very casual opportunities of knowledge; not from intercourse or any sort of sympathy, but from simple looking at them. "With men," he says, "I do not much associate; not as deserting, and much less disliking, the male part of society, but as being unfit for it; not hardy, nor grave, nor knowing enough, nor sufficiently acquainted with the every-day concerns of men." It is not exactly the idea one would form of Crabbe from his poetry, at least from a superficial perusal of it; but he was a soft-hearted old gentleman, and loved to be petted by ladies. "My beloved creatures," says he, meaning women, "have minds with which I can better assimilate."

It is with the poor, and those who constitute the lower half of the middle class, that Crabbe chiefly deals. He says truly that these possess in their conditions of life more room for vigorous individual growth, and are less compressed by con-

Digitized by Google

ventional habits into set shapes, than any others; but there was, if not a better, a more practical reason for his drawing from them. He had seen more of them, and therefore knew them better. With the exception of his brief stay in London and at Beaconsfield and Belvoir, he had, when he wrote, lived the life either of a country surgeon or a country clergyman, and had mingled little, if at all, in what the world calls society. Nor, if had done so, was his a mind or an imagination to take cognisance of the finer *nuances* in which differences of character there display themselves. He could scarcely have studied men through their manners. He required marked differences, though they might be minute, showing themselves in marked characteristics, though they might not be obvious to a less close observer. It may even be said further that he lacked the power to appreciate any very finished degree of culture or extended reach of intellect. He reverenced and admired Burke and Fox; but they made no deep and abiding impression on him. When Moore and Rogers, anxious to secure any recollections of Burke which could be gathered from contemporary sources, came to consult Crabbe as to the conversation of his great patron, he could tell them nothing. He absolutely seems never to have formed an idea of the sort of men they really were. But he could draw with an unerring pencil a Sir Denis Brand or an Isaac Ashford; he explored with wonderful accuracy the depths and shallows of minds, however singular, which were of a certain calibre only. His eyes were always directed on a level or downwards. Nothing escaped their keen and penetrating gaze but what was set too far above or beyond their scope. Within certain narrow limits of range he has displayed a greater faculty for marking and describing nice distinctions in human character than any poet since Shakespeare. But it is not to be supposed he resembles Shakespeare. On the contrary, he stands as far apart from him as it is possible to do; and this not only by the whole interval between richness and poverty of fancy, but by another characteristic, important indeed, but not very easy to describe. Shakespeare cannot touch a thread in the vast network of the universe, but the whole web seems to quiver under his hands and to vibrate in his imagination; some haunting image of the whole breaks through and shines in each particular fancy. What most distinguishes him from every other poet is his strange intimacy with all the various relations borne by the matter he is handling to all other things, and his power by some rapid side-glance of indicating these relations, however remote and subtle. It would need his own command of language to describe exactly what his power is. We must be content to feel it, and to say,

Digitized by Google

that it is as if he never detached a portion of the whole world of things, to deal with it; but only occupied a part of it, leaving all its connecting links and clues of association unsevered and even undisturbed: as if he played each play of his on some plot of forest ground marked out only by the surrounding trees, between which, and through shrub and quivering foliage, we glance along the shifting and interminable vistas which penetrate the unbounded woodland.

Crabbe is the reverse of all this. His genius works in things limited and disconnected. He cuts you off a piece of human nature, and holds it in his hand for you to look at. He builds up separate little brick cottages of mortal characteristics, and is glad when he can get them to stand in a row; then he makes a book of them. But his are no sham structures, no lath and plaster; all his bricks are moulded of real human clay, his timbers are taken from the events of real life; he bodies forth nothing but the shapes of things as they are. He is the antipodes of Shakespeare, because he is the plainest, the most detached, the most matter-of-fact of poets; but he is the antipodes of Byron, because he is the most truthful and the most conscientious of poets. Byron's imagination was like some great bright reflector, of shining but uneven surface, in which are shaped brilliant but distorted images; Crabbe's was like a little square flat Dutch glass, which reflects a small area, but that exactly.

Closely connected with this side of his genius is another of the main characteristics of his poetry—the way in which all the more fine threads of intellectual effort and moral character in men are ignored—the manner in which every thing is stripped of the atmosphere which surrounds it and unites it to other things, and exhibited square and naked, without the softened outline and the grace which particular things derive from the fineness of the shades with which they pass into something else. He has no eye for the aerial softness and blended colouring of nature. He describes with a hard resolute pen, idealising nothing; but, on the contrary, often omitting all that casts a veil over meanness and deformity. Yet it is a mistake to speak of Crabbe's pictures of life as gloomy; and Byron characterised him still less aptly when he styled him "nature's sternest painter." There is nothing stern either in his disposition or his writings. A quiet kindliness prevails in both; he makes full, one might almost sometimes say undue, allowance for the frailties of human nature. He is neither exacting in his demands nor severe in his reprehensions. It is the very want of a high ideal and of the softening and refining influence of a lofty imagination which give to his poetry that distin-

Digitized by Google

guishing character which is in reality neither gloom nor sternness, but rudeness, if it is to be characterised in one word. He had a mild disposition, but a certain harshness of mind. His pictures of nature are naked, and in the worse sense of nakedness. He had nothing of that eye by which the sculptor sees in the figure of man the suggestion of the Apollo Belvidere; he had not the power to pierce beyond the mixed deformities of human organisation; he had not even a pleasure in studying its higher types. Had he been a sculptor, he would have modelled the ungainly ploughboy or the warped artisan, not the athlete or the hunter. The stamp of his birth and early education was effaced from his manners and his ordinary modes of thought, but was ineffaceably impressed in the deeper parts of his nature. There is a something in seaside-dwelling men, especially of towns and of our eastern coasts, as if the salt spray and heavy winds had helped to mould them; it is not so much native coarseness as a sort of weather-beaten cast. Such men are resolute, but stubborn; they are daring, with a sort of moody contempt of danger, which they neither love nor care to avoid; hard, self-dependent, intolerant of weakness, —men who are accustomed to contend with difficulties below themselves rather than to avail themselves of advantages to rise; they have a nature tenacious, claylike—like clay too in being at once common and valuable. Doubtless Crabbe was very different from such men; but, softened and refined as he was, something both of the rudeness and the strength of this salt Suffolk blood lay about the base of his character.

He handles life so as to take the bloom off it. His way of viewing things is one which recommends itself to many minds, and in some moods to us all. Sometimes we cannot take wings, and ascend to the higher truths of existence and the more essential and more refined aspects of things. We ask for the coarse substantial certainties of common experience,—for sense, not only common sense but vulgar sense; we acknowledge our appetites,—bread, beef, and beer seem valuable; we lay hold of tangible ponderable certainties; we look on the landscape with an eye to crops, the great sea as a place to fish in and wherein to float steamers, and "the glorious sun himself" seems made to shine in at window. Such thoughts and feelings are good for us at times; these sort of things are the rude foundation-stones of our lives, let them rise to whatever lofty purposes and spring with whatever beauty of carved arch and aspiring pinnacle into the heavens. It is steadying and sobering to turn sometimes to them, though it would be debasing to live too much among them. And Crabbe, with all his excellencies, his genuine simplicity, his uncompromising moral tone,

Digitized by Google

his kindliness, his manliness, cannot be said to be an elevating poet, or to exercise a refining influence. He paints correctly, but inadequately; as if one should copy the Venus de' Medici with exactness, but in sandstone. Hence that disenchanting air which hangs over his works. He rises above it sometimes; but it is the prevailing tone, and as such, has universally made itself felt. The swift aspirations, the winged hopes, the impassioned affections of men, the mystery of life, the problem of death,—you must not look to see these things touched upon; but instead of it an unshrinking hand laid on all that lies bare to our sight, and a calm unharassed contentment to abide in the common and obvious conditions of human life. In his preaching as in his verse he was fond of what was tangible, plain, and practical. He was a tolerant man; but the thing he had least tolerance for was enthusiasm, and the fervour of the Methodists and their sudden conversions were just the things to annoy him,—he wrote and preached against them with vehemence. On the other hand, he himself,—and it is significant of the state of the church in his day,—earned the appellation of a "Gospel preacher," implying that he was a little overstrained in his notions; and this because he had some conviction of the intrinsic importance of religion, and preached a doctrine of future rewards and punishments, instead of simply drawing attention to the worldly advantages which follow in the train of prudent and not overstrained virtue.

He was a man rather of affectionate nature than of deep feelings, and it is very rarely indeed that he ventures on the delineation of strong passion or uncontrolled emotion. He may describe the consequences of such things; but he nowhere, so far as we can remember, gives them a direct voice. "Sir Eustace Grey," indeed, contains a forcible picture of terrors; but it is an enumeration of past terrors, nor can we acquiesce in the place Gifford assigns it. Like every thing of Crabbe's, it is too defined, too explicit and limited. But the essence of terror lies in dim imaginations, in appeals to an unascertained capacity of suffering, in the stirring of dread and uncomprehended possibilities of pain. When we can gaze on even the worst forms of anguish in the face, they lose much of their power of exciting terror. Sir Eustace catalogues the miseries of his madness and despair, and details the tortures inflicted on him by the fiends:

> "Those fiends upon a shaking fen
> Fix'd me, in dark tempestuous night
> There never trod the foot of men,
> There flock'd the fowl in wintry flight;
> There danced the moor's deceitful light
> Above the pool where sedges grow;

Digitized by Google

And when the morning-sun shone bright,
It shone upon a field of snow.

They hung me on a bough so small,
The rook could build her nest no higher;
They fix'd me on the trembling ball
That crowns the steeple's quiv'ring spire;
They set me where the seas retire,
But drown with their returning tide;
And made me flee the mountain's fire,
When rolling from its burning side.

I've hung upon the ridgy steep
Of cliffs, and held the rambling brier;
I've plunged below the billowy deep,
Where air was sent me to respire;
I've been where hungry wolves retire;
And (to complete my woes) I've ran
Where Bedlam's crazy crew conspire
Against the life of reasoning man."

This is forcible and frightful; but it does not shake the spirit and make quail the heart, like some parts of De Quincy's description of the "Mater Tenebrarum." The only passion which Crabbe really moves deeply is the one to which he was himself most accessible, that of pity. A sort of quiet compassion is the mood in which he contemplates the sorrows and troubles of mortality; and he excites the same feeling in his readers, not by any direct appeal, but by the tenor of his narrative and the contagious influence of his own temper. The description in "Resentment" of the abject wretchedness of the broken merchant contrasted with the unfeeling rigour of his prosperous wife, and especially those last lines in which the soft-hearted maid-servant has no eyes for the faults of her mistress in her remorse for the slowness of her own compassion, afford perhaps the best instance of his power in this direction.

It is curious that, with so sound a mind of his own, Crabbe loves to speak of and describe a disordered intellect; and it is a proof of his penetration, that he traces the disordering influence of sin on the mind, and is not content with telling us how it affects the feelings only. In this direction he shows more insight than in any other; and "Edward Shore" and "Peter Grimes" will always rank among his master-pieces. The former is a narrative the more striking perhaps from the unexaggerated diction in which it is clothed, and the homely simplicity of the reflections which accompany it. It shows how genius, grace, proud thoughts, and aspiring hopes to live true to a high ideal, may be no charm to secure their owner from the depths of human degradation, if they be but the furnish-

Digitized by Google

ings of a self-centered heart and want the basis of pure principle to sustain them. It is useless to attempt to epitomise Crabbe's poems, and few can be ignorant of that remarkable history of genius and ambition traced through their alliance with unfenced passion and indulged pride to their setting in idiocy. It is in describing an unsettled brain that Crabbe most often rises above the level of his ordinary strain, not only in his matter but in his utterance:

> "That gentle maid, whom once the youth had loved,
> Is now with mild religious pity moved;
> Kindly she chides his boyish flights, while he
> Will for a moment fix'd and pensive be;
> And as she trembling speaks, his lively eyes
> Explore her looks, he listens to her sighs;
> Charm'd by her voice, th' harmonious sounds invade
> His clouded mind, and for a time persuade:
> Like a pleased infant, who has newly caught
> From the maternal glance a gleam of thought,
> He stands enrapt the half-known voice to hear,
> And starts, half-conscious, at the falling tear.
>
> Rarely from town, nor then unwatch'd, he goes,
> In darker mood, as if to hide his woes;
> Returning soon, he with impatience seeks
> His youthful friends, and shouts, and sings, and speaks;
> Speaks a wild speech with action all as wild—
> The children's leader, and himself a child;
> He spins their top, or at their bidding bends
> His back, while o'er it leap his laughing friends;
> Simple and weak, he acts the boy once more,
> And heedless children call him *Silly Shore*."

The story of "the Parish Clerk," long proud in his integrity, and boastful of his superiority to the weaknesses of those around him, betrayed into a system of pilfering the church offerings, and convicted at the altar before the whole congregation, is another instance of the same kind; and the description of the effect upon the man furnishes one of the finest examples of Crabbe's poetical capacity, and of the power of his unadorned but vigorous imagination:

> "He lived in freedom, but he hourly saw
> How much more fatal justice is than law;
> He saw another in his office reign,
> And his mild master treat him with disdain;
> He saw that all men shunn'd him, some reviled,
> The harsh pass'd frowning, and the simple smiled;
> The town maintain'd him, but with some reproof,
> 'And clerks and scholars proudly kept aloof.'
> In each lone place, dejected and dismay'd,
> Shrinking from view, his wasting form he laid;
> Or to the restless sea and roaring wind
> Gave the strong yearnings of a rain'd mind:

Digitized by Google

On the broad beach, the silent summer-day,
Stretch'd on some wreck, he wore his life away;
Or where the river mingles with the sea,
Or on the mud-bank by the elder-tree,
Or by the bounding marsh-dike, there was he:
And when unable to forsake the town,
In the blind courts he sat desponding down—
Always alone; then feebly would he crawl
The church-way walk, and lean upon the wall.
Too ill for this, he lay beside the door,
Compell'd to hear the reasoning of the poor:
He look'd so pale, so weak, the pitying crowd
Their firm belief of his repentance vow'd;
They saw him then so ghastly and so thin,
That they exclaim'd, 'Is this the work of sin?'
'Yes,' in his better moments he replied,
'Of sinful avarice and the spirit's pride.
While yet untempted, I was safe and well;
Temptation came; I reason'd, and I fell:
To be man's guide and glory I design'd—
A rare example for our sinful kind;
But now my weakness and my guilt I see,
And am a warning—man, be warn'd by me!'
He said, and saw no more the human face;
To a lone loft he went, his dying place,
And, as the vicar of his state inquired,
Turn'd to the wall and silently expired."

"Peter Grimes" portrays the influence of a savage sort of remorse on a coarse and brutal nature. It is powerful but rude drawing, and a far more vivid and terror-inspiring picture of raving alienation of intellect than that contained in "Sir Eustace Grey." The image of the depraved and sullen criminal floating in his boat along some solitary reach of the stagnant river, and gazing on the water until the shapes of those he has murdered rise to taunt him with his sin, is oppressive in its vividness and in the unsparing fidelity with which all the sad and foul aspects of the scene are catalogued, as if all the nature about him were in harmony with the callous heart of the sufferer.

Crabbe's writings cannot be said to be distinguished either by wit or humour. He sees the comic aspect of a matter sometimes, and reports it in a matter-of-fact deliberate way that has a pleasant air of quaintness, such as distinguishes "the Frank Courtship;" but there is nothing in his writings to laugh at. His bent is in another direction—to moralise; and it may be said that all of his poetry which does not consist in direct scrutiny of men themselves, is made up of observations on the moral phenomena resulting from their characters and actions. And here the same mind shows itself as elsewhere: you are not to expect what is subtle or profound, but what is

Digitized by Google

sensible, keen, direct, and sagacious. Here, as elsewhere, he displays great acuteness, and little delicacy of perception. His remarks are all detached, and made without any view to general deductions. He collected the materials for his poetry in just the same way as he collected his facts in science; and both in poetry and science he showed himself absolutely destitute of the philosophic spirit. What he called botany, was gathering plants and knowing their names; entomology was collecting specimens of insects without even arranging them. He was satisfied with single links of knowledge, and never cared to discover how they made parts of a chain. He never reasons. He says many shrewd things, and some things, occasionally wise things, about human life, especially its moral conditions; but they are always things he has seen and noted, never conclusions he has deduced. Reading him is like going into a museum; you are introduced to a collection of human traits and experiences. He absolutely adds not so much to your knowledge of human nature as to your opportunities of studying it. He supplies you with new information; but, just as is the case in a museum, the pleasure and advantage are limited. Once become sufficiently familiar with Crabbe to know what he has written, and there is nothing more to be gained from him. It is all patent. A man may read *Lear* ten, twenty, and a hundred times; and if his mind be awake, he will every time find something fresh, something he did not before know was there said, or implied, or hinted at. No man has a right to say he knows a single speech written by Shakespeare until he has learned it by heart, and thought on it night and morning. A man may read a page of Wordsworth, and think it commonplace; but, musing on it quietly and long, he will find a depth beneath its apparent platitude, and a harmony under its seeming ungainliness, which will find him food for his deepest meditations, and which daily converts sceptics of his genius into worshipers, the more inclined to blindness because they seem to work with the poet to their results. But Crabbe—you may read him twice; but you must be gifted with a short memory to enjoy him after this, except in some isolated passages which rise above his ordinary strain. "The Convert" is a clear piece of drawing; but one does not recur to the moral again and again:

> "Unhappy Dighton! had he found a friend,
> When conscience told him it was time to mend,—
> A friend discreet, considerate, kind, sincere,
> Who would have shown the grounds of hope and fear,
> And proved that spirits, whether high or low,
> No certain tokens of man's safety show;
> Had reason ruled him in her proper place,
> And virtue led him while he lean'd on grace;

Digitized by Google

Had he while zealous been discreet and pure,
His knowledge humble, and his hope secure;—
These guides had placed him n the solid rock,
Where faith had rested, n received a shock:
But his, alas! was placed upon the sand,
Where long it stood not, and where none can stand."

We are afraid Mr. Crabbe preached like that. Irreproachable sermonising, "sound," and so forth; but rather in what has irreverently been called the "chopped-hay" school, and, at any rate, not good poetry. This sort of commonplace is, no doubt, interspersed with shrewd telling observations; still, they are of the kind which bear their full meaning on the surface. You are not drawn into deeper thought; but, on the other hand, as we have said, you often positively add to your knowledge about the habits of human beings. It is a sort of moral "animated nature." Thus:

"The boy indeed was at the grandam's side
Humour'd and train'd, her trouble and her pride:
Companions dear, with speech and spirits mild,
The childish widow and the vaporish child;
This nature prompts; minds uninform'd and weak
In such alliance ease and comfort seek;
Push'd by the levity of youth aside,
The cares of man, his humour, or his pride,
They feel, in their defenceless state, allied:
The child is pleased to meet regard from age,
The old are pleased ev'n children to engage;
And all their wisdom, scorn'd by proud mankind,
They love to pour into the ductile mind;
By its own weakness into error led,
And by fond age with prejudices fed."

For details he had a sort of passion, and his interest in them was proportioned to their smallness. Of all observers he is the minutest. In the world of natural history, of whose study, in a certain way, he was no mean proficient, he was always occupied in finding out and studying the small and insignificant tribes. Beauty invited him not the least. Among plants he studied grasses and lichens, or the least marked of the roadside flowers; not, apparently, interested in plants like the cryptogams or others which might be supposed to invite by the singularity of their modes of growth, but attracted absolutely by insignificance and vulgarity. He loved weeds for their own sake. In zoology he took to entomology, and hunted down small beetles and flies. In his writings the same spirit is observable. He found no subject too insignificant to be dwelt on, no trait too minute to be recorded. Hence a certain air of narrowness and pettiness distinguishes his writings. And he was moreover very insensible to the claims of proportion, and

Digitized by Google

showed no skill in adjusting the detail of his treatment to the claims of the several parts of his stories. His son has some very just observations on this aspect of his mind:

"In fact," he says, "he neither loved order for its own sake, nor had any very high opinion of that passion in others; witness his words in the tale of Stephen Jones, the 'Learned Boy:'

> 'The *love of order*—I the thing receive
> From reverend men, and I in part believe—
> Shows a clear mind and clean; and whoso needs
> This love, but seldom in the world succeeds.
> Still has *the love of order* found a place
> With all that's low, degrading, mean, and base;
> With all that merits scorn, and all that meets disgrace.
> In the cold miser of all change afraid,
> In pompous men in public seats obey'd,
> In humble placemen, heralds, solemn drones,
> Fanciers of flowers, and lads like Stephen Jones;
> Order to these is armour and defence,
> And love of method serves for lack of sense.'

Whatever truth there may be in these lines, it is certain that this insensibility to the beauty of order was a defect in his own mind, arising from what I must call his want of taste. There are, no doubt, very beautiful detached passages in his writings,—passages apparently full of this very quality. It is not, however, in detached parts of a poem that the criterion of this principle properly lies, but in the conduct of the whole; in the selection of the subject and its amplifications; in the relative disposition and comparative prominency of the parts, and in the contrasts afforded by bearing lightly or heavily on the pencil. In these things Mr. Crabbe is generally admitted to be not a little deficient; and what can demonstrate the high rank of his other qualifications better than the fact, that he could acquire such a reputation in spite of so serious a disadvantage? This view of his mind, I must add, is confirmed by his remarkable indifference to almost all the proper objects of taste. He had no real love for painting, or music, or architecture, or for what a painter's eye considers as the beauties of landscape. But he had a passion for science,—the science of the human mind, first; then, that of nature in general; and lastly, that of abstract quantities."

By "science" as here used must be understood knowledge of facts; for Mr. Crabbe, as we have said, had not the least taste for the investigation of laws. In corroboration of his indifference to the charms of external nature, may be cited a saying of his own, that he loved better to walk in the streets and observe the faces of the passers-by than to gaze on the finest natural scene.

The style of Crabbe is not less characteristic than his matter. It is not, however, so purely his own; and though he makes it the faithful instrument of his purposes, it always bears the

Digitized by Google

traces of the model on which it was formed. Horace Smith called him "Pope in worsted stockings." It would have been more to the purpose to say he was a new poet in Pope's stockings; for the likeness is in the superficies, and the contrast is in the substance. Crabbe formed himself on Pope's style, deliberately studied his mode of expression, and sought to catch his pointed way of putting things, in which, and not in the flow of his verse, lies the characteristic excellence of Pope's style. And Crabbe did attain this excellence to a certain extent. The points are much blunter, the polish is vastly inferior: but there is the same effort to afford a share of emphasis to every sentence, to give a sharp decisive accent of meaning to correspond with the marked accent of the verse; and a considerable degree of success attends the effort. It was an excellent school for Crabbe to be exercised in; his natural bent was to be dull, minute, and prolix. The study of Pope made him look out for rest at brief intervals, for contrast and relief. If we read some of his prefaces, we shall see what he might have been in verse had he not contended against his native propensities. He emancipated himself from being a proser. Poets, even good poets, have not always done this. Rogers is a refined proser; Wordsworth is a profound, a sagacious, a harmonious, and a most interminable proser. But, in substance, Crabbe differs widely from Pope. Pope is always employed in giving a specific shape to generalities; Crabbe is occupied with things as they are. Pope, except when personal, was always working out results and deductions, making up thoughts and giving them a taking form; Crabbe never wished to do more than describe graphically and agreeably (according to his notions of the agreeable in verse) what things he had seen and known. Pope's business, as he himself says, was to find rhymes for sense; Crabbe's was, to find rhymes for facts. Pope studied society, manners, and man; Crabbe studied social life, moral habits, and men. If he ever imitated Pope's matter, it was only in his very early poems; and even his style lost its influence over his later poems, and very much to their disadvantage. He is not a master of expression. His language is the very reverse of suggestive. It is so bald and dry, that the reader must furnish all accessories from his own imagination. He must give colour and shading to the thought, he must improve the hint, and clothe the naked idea. Crabbe writes like one who draws outlines with a hard pencil; and he who reads must employ a vivid fancy to fill them up. Moreover he has none of that power by which a great poet gathers up and compresses the details of his subject within the limits of the briefest general description. He is not a pregnant writer; what he has to say, he says *in extenso;* and

Digitized by Google

though he is often curt, it is only as a way of filling up interstices and introducing or connecting pieces of prolix detail. Yet it is wonderful how much he contrives by this process to get into a small compass. This is particularly the case in his portrait-painting. He packs a complete and characteristic picture in very small space, and after a peculiar fashion. He does not, like Ben Jonson, and sometimes Dickens, take a distinguishing humour or trait, or a set of these, and call them a man: his people are real living people; mere sketches often, no doubt, but exact, defined, and likenesses. Though he may imitate Pope in his style, he has none of his epigrammatic way of pinning a character down by a single prominent trait; none of Wordsworth's habit of slowly winding it off as if it were a hank of cotton, and his poem a reel to wind it on. He sets to work in a way of his own, giving a brief, forcible, general description, and illustrating it by some dramatic speech or minor piece of description at full length. His pictures are like one of Grüner's plates of a painted ceiling, the whole drawn in outline and a corner filled up in colours. It is true, his early attempts savour more of direct and elaborate description both of things and persons, and that, where the subject suits him, he has few rivals in the skill with which he selects distinguishing points, or the aptness with which he conveys their effect through the medium of language. But when he is at his best, as in *The Tales*, the dramatic element holds a considerable space in his delineation of persons, and the peculiar style we have mentioned is seen in its perfection; fading down in *The Tales of the Hall* into something too much of prolixity and mere conversation in verse.

Our limits afford no space for a detailed survey of his various writings. It was not until he discovered that his strength lay in the minute illustration of human character that he really enrolled himself among English poets. In his early poems, often even in *The Borough*, he shows too clearly that he is hunting about for matter for his rhymes, and making prize of every idea he can lay his hands on. As long as he is occupied with general ideas and thoughts, Crabbe is insufferably commonplace and dull. For one sound and novel aphorism, brightly and aptly expressed,—the sort of thing with which Pope's pages teem,—his imitator (for when thus employed Crabbe is a direct imitator of Pope) gives us a hundred heavy disconnected sentences, which prance awkwardly up and down the verse like a cart-horse cantering after a thorough-bred. Thus, to quote the first specimen that offers:

> "Law was design'd to keep a state in peace;
> To punish robbery; that wrong might cease;

Digitized by Google

To be impregnable; a constant fort,
To which the weak and injured might resort.
But these perverted minds its force employ,
Not to protect mankind, but to annoy;
And long as ammunition can be found,
Its lightning flashes and its thunders sound.
Or law with lawyers is an ample still,
Wrought by the passions' heat with chymic skill;
While the fire burns, the gains are quickly made,
And freely flow the profits of the trade;
Nay, when the fierceness fails, these artists blow
The dying fire, and make the embers glow,
As long as they can make the smaller profits flow;
At length the process of itself will stop,
When they perceive they've drawn out every drop.
Yet, I repeat, there are who nobly strive
To keep the sense of moral worth alive;
Men who would starve, ere meanly deign to live
On what deception and chicanery give:
And these at length succeed; they have their strife,
Their apprehensions, stops, and rubs in life;
But honour, application, care, and skill,
Shall bend opposing fortune to their will."

The Library is pompous, pointless, and commonplace; and the only thing that men have found worth remembrance in it is the description of the binding of old folios. Once or twice only in the whole course of it is to be found some stray couplet which points in the direction of the author's real insight; such lines, for instance, as

> "For transient vice bequeaths a lingering pain,
> Which transient virtue strives to heal in vain."

However unadorned in statement, such a dictum indicates much of observation and something of wisdom in the writer.

The Newspaper is full of platitudes and pumped-up thought. It is a satire unrecommended by the force and brilliancy which alone can make satire endurable. The minor poems are simply unreadable. *The Library*, indeed, was published under the auspices of Burke; but if upon this poem alone he had formed his estimate of the author's genius, one would have said either that he had a very low idea of the requisites of poetry, or an almost supernatural insight into the germs of future success which lay hidden in the poem in question. But it seems it was on some very different lines, in *The Village*, that Burke rested his high opinion of the powers of his young client. They are lines which amply justify the prophecy of success; and, indeed, *The Village* stands quite alone among Crabbe's earlier writings. In it he spoke straight from his own personal convictions, he described directly what he had seen and known. The complexion of it differs from that of his other poems. It alone of

Digitized by Google

his writings may with some degree of justice be called stern and gloomy. The struggle and the painful experience through which he was himself passing coloured the medium through which he looked. His picture of the life and sufferings of the poor in this poem leaves an indelible impression on the mind of every reader. It is not only that it is uncompromising, that it tears off and scornfully casts aside the old stage-costume of Corydon and Phyllis; but that it keeps aloof from all the sources of comfort and consolation, the common assuagements which are not denied even to the lowest aspects of human life, and builds in its forcible lines so sad a picture of unrequited and incessant toil, deserted old age, and miserable death, as none can look at without a shudder. And when, in the second part, he turns professedly to contemplate the

"Gleams of transient mirth and hours of sweet repose,"

the subject leads him instantly to the vices which form or accompany the amusements of the poor, and he immediately becomes absorbed in this, to him, more attractive subject. For force, aptness of language, fervour, and directness, the first part of *The Village* stands unapproached among Crabbe's early poems.

The Borough, with many parts and detached passages of first-class excellence, is a very unequal performance; and it is not until the first series of *The Tales* that Crabbe's genius displays itself in its full power, and maintains a sustained and unwavering flight. It is on *The Village*, on detached parts of *The Borough*, and on *The Tales* (the second series of which is less fresh, graphic, and pointed than the first), that the permanent reputation of Crabbe rests. The posthumous poems cannot be said to be destitute of his peculiar merits; but they must be confessed, on the other hand, to be very unworthy of what had preceded them.

The common feature throughout all his works which gives this author his hold upon his readers is his singular insight into the minute working of character, his wondrous familiarity with so vast a number of various dispositions, and the unerring fidelity with which he traces their operations and discerns their attitudes under every sort of circumstance. It would be difficult in the whole range of literature to point to more than two or three who have rivalled him in this respect. Chaucer is one; and a curious and not uninteresting comparison might be instituted between the two, though the old poet far surpasses the modern one in love of beauty, liveliness of fancy, and breadth of genius. Crabbe knew where his own strength lay, and in some lines in *The Borough* has aptly described both the bent and the animus of his poetic powers:

Digitized by Google

" For this the poet looks the world around,
Where form and life and reasoning man are found;
He loves the mind, in all its modes, to trace,
And all the manners of the changing race;
Silent he walks the road of life along,
And views the aims of its tumultuous throng:
He finds what shapes the Proteus-passions take,
And what strange waste of life and joy they make,
And loves to show them in their varied ways,
With honest blame or with unflattering praise:
'Tis good to know, 'tis pleasant to impart,
These turns and movements of the human heart;
The stronger features of the soul to paint,
And make distinct the latent and the faint:
MAN AS HE IS to place in all men's view,
Yet none with rancour, none with scorn pursue:
Nor be it ever of my portraits told—
'Here the strong lines of malice we behold.'"

One great source of his strength is, that he dared to be true to himself, and to work with unhesitating confidence his own peculiar vein. This originality is not only great, but always genuine. A never-failing charm lies in the clear simplicity and truthfulness of nature which shines through all his writings. Nothing false or meretricious ever came from his pen; and if his works want order and beauty, neither they nor his life are destitute of the higher harmony which springs from a character naturally single and undeteriorated by false aims and broken purposes.

ART. II.—THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CATHERINE II.

Mémoires de l'Impératrice Catherine II; écrits par elle-même, et précédés d'une Préface par A. Herzen. Londres: Trübner et C^ie^. 1859.

La France ou l'Angleterre? Variations Russes sur le thême de l'Attentat du 14 janvier. Par Iscander (A. Herzen). Londres: Trübner et C^ie^. 1858.

A Handbook of the principal Families in Russia. Originally written in French by Prince Paul Dolgorouky; translated into English, with Annotations and an Introduction, by F. Z. London: James Ridgway, 1858.

"WHEN the fields of ice which imprison the waters of the Neva during five months of the year begin to break, the bridge of boats is immediately taken away, and all communication be-

Digitized by Google

tween the two banks of that broad river remains intercepted for several days. During that time the blocks of ice are rolled away by the stream; and when they have disappeared, the commandant of the fortress opens the navigation by repairing in a barge to the palace, and almost immediately afterwards the bridge is replaced. The commandant crosses the river with much solemnity, and amid the roar of artillery. His barge is armed with a few pieces of cannon, and followed by a procession composed of smaller boats. He goes to offer to the head of the state a goblet filled with water from the river, which goblet was formerly given back to him full of silver coin. Next a festivity is celebrated called 'the crossing of the river;' the people, dressed in holiday attire, throng the quays of the Neva, cross the river in small boats, and go to walk upon the ramparts of the fortress. This custom is peculiar to St. Petersburg, and is traced back to the time of Peter the Great. Doubtless that monarch thought proper to employ this popular means to make his subjects comprehend the great advantage they derived from this fine river, which, when it breaks its icy bonds, gives life to the city and animates also all the empire."

So writes a historian of Russia; and the description which he gives of the annual celebration of this important change in the face of nature might well serve as an allegorical representation of the great moral change which has just opened the internal condition and destiny of the Russian empire to the attention and sympathies of Western Europe. It is scarcely possible for the inhabitant of a mild "constitutional" climate to realise the intensity and continuity of that autocratic frost which chains, in a moral paralysis, the living and moving energies of an entire nation, or to enter fully into the transports of those joyful feelings with which even the temporary relaxation of this icy bondage is welcomed by all classes. In a self-governed people, even the errors and crimes of the government have some reference to the feelings and opinions of the nation, and State misfortunes and humiliations express, in some greater or less degree, the depression and demoralisation of society at large. But the winter, which, during such long periods, suspends the external vitality of the great northern empire, is a thing superinduced by the cold breath of a paramount despotism alone upon the national life which is stagnating beneath. Under whatever similarity of temperature the incrustation may have commenced, this will ere long cease to exist; but the icy prison-doors continue to be firmly closed long after the waters within have begun to yearn with daily increasing ardour for the return of the bright sun-god, who is to strike off their fetters, and restore them to the liberty and warmth of open day.

Digitized by Google

The joy felt at such a release must be of a much higher degree in the moral than in the physical case; since the epoch of its recurrence is so much less definite in the former than in the latter. The life of an individual sovereign may, indeed, be calculated within certain average limits; and if the era of national reanimation depended merely on the death of the particular emperor, the bondage might be more endurable, and the periodic delight more moderate. But this is not the case; for the sad experience of the last century and a half has shown that, while the changes in the sovereign authority have been frequent, the system has been strikingly uniform and continuous, and the chances of national regeneration few and far between. The captivity and exile from all hope may continue so long that the nation may feel disposed to echo the despairing cry of a Russian patriot, sent forth from Moscow during the reign of Nicholas: "As a nation, we have no future prospect. The innovations of Peter I. moulded us in the worst form that can be made of man. We are the *convinced slaves* that it shall be so as it is. We are like those Poles who remained many years in Kamstchatka, and to whom, at the accession of Paul, it was announced that they are free, and can return now to their dear country. 'Thank ye,' they replied, 'it is too far and too late; we are prepared to set off to another land—it is time to die!'" Nicholas, we are told, with politic wisdom, declared the publisher of these mournful forebodings to be a lunatic; but every one else in Russia "surrounded him with the greatest respect, and listened to the man like an oracle." The hopeless spirit, indeed, manifested in this lament over the departed national life explains fully that apathetic submission of an immense population to the despotic rule of one man which arouses the wonder, if not the contempt, of Englishmen, long accustomed to the invigorating air of perpetual freedom,—the *convinced freemen* of Europe. It also gives us some index of the amount of patriotic excitement likely to arise among the cultivated classes of Russia when they find that the national energies are responding eagerly to the first opportunities afforded them by the inauguration of a happier era, and that it was but a passing swoon which they might have mistaken for a premonitory symptom of national dissolution. Such we gather to be the feelings of the most intelligent of the Russian patriots at the great change which has been wrought in their country by the death of the Czar Nicholas, and the subsequent pacification with the Western Powers. "The progress which Russia has made during the three years of the reign of Alexander II.," says the Russian exile M. Herzen, "is immense. Every thing begins to move; the

Digitized by Google

muscles, cramped by a strait-waistcoat, expand again. Questions of the most vital importance are raised. Russia is entering *with tranquillity* upon a revolution in her economy." Herein lies a great distinction between the commencement of this and of previous reigns, which have nearly all of them been ushered in by a dynastic revolution, if not by a dynastic tragedy; and the first periods at least of which have been absorbed, so far as internal administration is concerned, in the consolidation of dynastic interests, the rewarding of successful, or the punishment of unsuccessful, conspirators. To these dynastic necessities and personal animosities the internal welfare of the nation, and its real interests, have been constantly postponed and sacrificed. The stern self-compressed character of Nicholas would undoubtedly have made itself felt under any circumstances; but it is not the less true that the insurrectionary storm which he encountered at the outset of his reign never ceased to brood upon his imagination, and, exaggerating his natural defects, determined in a great measure the general character of his administration. It began with a police inquisition; and it developed itself into a vast system of police surveillance, which it remained to the end. Though it did much for the nation, both at home and abroad, it never worked through or with the nation; for it regarded nearly every individual member of it as a possible conspirator. It tasked to the utmost the capabilities of an administrative despotism in meeting the exigencies of the home government and the demands of an aggressive foreign policy; but it shrank from enlisting, either as coadjutors or the gentlest critics of its measures, those who really had the chief interest in seeing them efficiently carried out, and the best means of so doing. Then came the war with England and France, in which the natural and multiplying energies of a free people were contrasted in the face of all Europe with the concentrated but self-exhausting exertions of an artificial and irresponsible despotism. The result is recognised in Russia itself, as well as elsewhere, as a proof that, even for martial glory and the glitter of external conquests, it is not a desirable thing that the voice of a nation should be reduced to the deceitful whispers which lull an autocrat into false security, and persuade him that the unassisted powers of one man are equal to the task of not only giving every order throughout a vast empire, but seeing also that it is carried properly into effect. That the Russian people performed nobly every duty which was assigned or left to it throughout that severe struggle, no one entertains a doubt; but while the limited confidence inevitably placed in the national spirit was more than justified, its limitation to such an inferior *rôle* was condemned in the

Digitized by Google

plainest manner by the failures and collapse of the imperial directory. At this very crisis the great engineer of this discredited machine was removed from his onerous post by a destiny happy for himself as well as for his country; and the crown descended without a national convulsion upon the head of a prince who was uncompromised by his father's prejudices, and was at liberty to consult the interests of the nation without feeling that he was thereby sacrificing his own. Peace had become a necessity for Russia, as incumbent on the sovereign as desirable for the subject. The memories of 1825 need no longer be kept alive by the continuance of a system which had proved itself so inefficient in the hands of a most skilful master; it might be quietly dropped without lowering the personal reputation of the emperor, and public opinion might be as quietly invited to assume its long-suspended duties without exposing monarch or people to the trial of an abrupt and revolutionary crisis. This has in a great measure been done. General Doubelt, chief of the secret police at St. Petersburg; General Count Peter Kleinmichel, chief superintendent of bridges and highways, and a very unpopular favourite of the Emperor Nicholas, with other equally compromised dignitaries,—have been dismissed by Alexander II.; and hitherto, at least, we hear of no unworthy appointments in their place. The doors have been thrown open for the return of some of the most compromised of the Russian exiles. Even M. Ivan Golovine, whom, if any one, the house of Romanoff might be justified in making an exception to its amnesty, has received permission to reënter Russia. The press has been set at comparative liberty, and cheap newspapers are starting in abundance to compete with the high-priced monopoly of those privileged by the old censorship. Russians are beginning to speak their real thoughts to one another, and it is no longer necessary to seek a foreign soil for the luxury of breathing freely. The new Czar has made his individual action distinctly felt; but it is no longer ostentatiously self-sufficient. The nobility have been first invited, and then admonished, to coöperate in the great and difficult project of emancipating the serfs; and whether or not the completion of this undertaking be destined to equal the wishes of its author, the fact that those most interested in its just adjudication have been compelled by the voice of authority to throw aside the selfish indifference of spectators *in possession*, and to become counsellors and executors of the most feasible scheme, is significant of a great change from the independent action of the old system of administration.

Will these fair prospects last; or are we to witness the return with twofold density of that moral gloom in which the

Digitized by Google

history of Russia has been hitherto shrouded? This question will, of course, be differently answered according to the more sanguine or desponding temperament of the reasoner. A much more practically important inquiry remains,—whether it is in the power of England to facilitate the favourable solution of the problem, and to throw any determining weight into the doubtful scales in which the happiness of her recent opponent hangs suspended. It must be remembered, that this is not an age when the life of one nation can be developed or stifled without affecting materially that of all others. There is now a general European atmosphere, which cannot be prevented from entering into and mixing with the air which we ourselves breathe. And just so far as we recognise this fact, and endeavour to purify this inspiration of our common European civilisation, instead of deluding ourselves with the possibility of a separate monopoly of health, will the continuance of our own strength be assured, and our permanent influence as a nation be felt and acknowledged in the European commonwealth. Russia must now seek *national* alliances. It was easy for a despotic court to confine itself to diplomatic and court relations with other countries; but the resuscitated Russian *nation* will find little of common interest or sympathy in the *coteries* of Vienna or Paris. It will turn to those countries which have a national and not a bureaucratic existence. England will have the first chance; if she is lukewarm, the rising spirit of Prussia may anticipate her. Already the animosities caused by the recent war are dying out. Our late ambassador to Russia, Lord Wodehouse, in an admirable speech delivered the other day on his return from his mission, pointed out this change in Russian sentiment towards this country; and though he wisely,—with the example of France in his eye,—counselled moderation in our advances of friendship, and bade us remember that there are in every nation special interests and wishes which might not always coincide with the general welfare of Europe, yet at the same time he expressed his deliberate conviction that the present wishes and objects of Russia are not inimical to ours, but the contrary. We trust that the temperate heat which he so justly counselled in international relations may be fostered and sustained between the two nations; and that it may be under the guidance of English, rather than German or French, sympathies that the future destinies of Russia shall be directed. The martinetism of Berlin and the heartless frivolity of Paris have had their respective reigns in Russian society; it remains to be seen whether the growing national liberties of Russia may not be trained and stimulated under an *English* era.

But to secure this desirable end, it is not sufficient that we

Digitized by Google

should hold out to intelligent Russians our own constitution and its history as a model of imitation or a subject of study. They will not prove apt or interested students, to the sources of whose deficiencies, and the peculiarities of whose capabilities, the master himself is wilfully indifferent. A nation which feels an aspiration for freedom, is *ipso facto* proud and sensitive of neglect; and the nation which would aim at the direction of its future history, must not be above making itself master of its past. We therefore hail with especial pleasure the publication in this country of any work in which English and Russians may find a common ground of interest; from which the former, as well as the latter, may learn what it is which has placed Russia in her present position, and through what untoward circumstances the national spirit has struggled and survived. We only regret that in the present instance our joint historical studies have been inaugurated by disclosures which may hurt the *amour-propre* of the royal family of Russia exactly when its personal feelings are of most importance to European civilisation. The truth, however, must be known at all hazards; and the lesson which the royal *house*, if not the *family*, of Romanoff should rightly draw from the mysteries of a royal court, here unfolded to the eyes of Europe, is not one unfavourable to the cause of constitutional government.

A few hours after the death of the Empress Catherine II., her son, the Emperor Paul, M. Herzen tells us, ordered Count Rostoptchine to put seals on the papers of the empress. The emperor was himself present at the arrangement of these papers. Among them was found the celebrated letter of Alexis Orloff, in which, "in a cynical tone and with a drunken hand," he announced to the empress the assassination of her husband Peter III. Another Ms. which was found was one entirely in the handwriting of Catherine, enclosed in an envelope bearing (in the Russian language) the address, "To his Imperial Highness the Césarewitch and Grand Duke Paul, my much-loved son." The manuscript thus addressed was the autobiography now for the first time published. It commences with the introduction of Catherine to the adopted country of her affianced husband, and terminates abruptly towards the close of the year 1759,—that is to say, a little more than two years before the death of the Empress Elizabeth and the accession of Peter III. There are reported to have been additional rough notes, which might have served as materials for continuing the narrative; and it is asserted by some that the Emperor Paul threw them into the fire. However this may be, he kept the contents of the manuscript a profound secret except from the friend of his childhood Prince Alexander Kourakine, whom he permitted

Digitized by Google

to take a copy of it. Twenty years after the death of Paul, Alexander Tourgeneff and Prince Michael Worontzow procured copies from that of Kourakine. This coming to the ears of the Emperor Nicholas, he ordered the police to seize all copies, and so for the time put a stop to the circulation of the manuscript. He also had the original brought to him, read it, sealed it up with the great seal of state, and ordered it to be kept in the imperial archives among the most secret documents.

An exception, however, was, it seems, at some time or other, made in favour of the tutor of the present emperor, Constantine Arsenieff, who told M. Herzen, in 1840, that he had been permitted to read these memoirs of Catherine among other unpublished illustrations of the period between the death of Peter I. and the reign of Alexander I. During the late Russian war the archives were transferred to Moscow; and in the month of March 1855, the present emperor had this manuscript brought to him for his perusal. After that time one or two copies got into circulation in Moscow and St. Petersburg, from one of which M. Herzen informs us the present volume is printed. Of its authenticity he states there is no doubt, and a glance at the contents will fully confirm this judgment.

A more curious and interesting contribution to history it would be impossible to imagine, or one more *apropos* in many respects to the regeneration to which Russia has committed herself. Here we have, drawn by the hand of one of the leading actors in the political drama of the last century, a minute Pre-Raphaelite picture of the court of Russia when autocracy was in its glory, and the fate, not only of Russia, but of Europe, depended on the vicissitudes in the counter-intrigues of *demoiselles d'honneur* and *valets-de-chambre*. The ludicrous trivialities of this bedchamber warfare will recall to our minds in an exaggerated form the contests of the Duchess of Marlborough and Mrs. Masham in the reign of our own Queen Anne. But a sombre background, which was happily wanting to the English figure-piece, is supplied in its Russian counterpart by the dungeons of Schlusselburg and Cronstadt and the dreary regions of Siberia. Between these fearful scenes of torture and the saloons of the imperial palaces there was a continual interchange of inhabitants during the reigns of the successors of Peter the Great; and it is the recollection that the names which constantly meet our eyes in the pages of this memoir are so many of them those of the past or future subjects or agents of these startling metamorphoses, which lends a deeper though more painful interest to what otherwise might pass as the monotonous record of the most frivolous profligacy. As it is, however, the doom hangs suspended over the heads of the

Digitized by Google

revellers; and it is with breathless interest that we watch the bearing of those on whose devoted heads we know that it is destined to fall.

The character of the woman who here undertakes to write the private history of her youth and early married life is such as in itself to command an attention of a peculiar and very absorbing kind. As "Catherine *the Great*" she has descended to our own times in the records of history with a very general acquiescence in the justice of the *intellectual* tribute implied in such an appellation. The verdict, however, which the same tradition has returned respecting the *moral* stamp of the czarina has been very different, though nearly as unanimous. A reign which was inaugurated and consolidated by the violent death of her husband, and of which the most important event of European interest is the iniquitous partition of Poland, would seem to stand in need of more than a usual amount of ingenious criticism to rescue the sovereign with whose fame it is associated from a heavy moral condemnation. The autobiography before us will not supply the foundation for any such vindication; indeed, it scarcely affects to do so in the slightest degree, and herein lies its great historic value, and one strong internal testimony to its authenticity. The czarina seems to take for granted the existence of a large amount of moral evil in herself as well as all around her; she only suggests, sometimes directly, but still more often indirectly, by the facts which she details, some explanation of the aggravated form which it subsequently assumed, and so far supplies the only palliation of which it is susceptible. No one can glance through this *memoir* without feeling that there is the stamp of truth on the revelations which it contains, and that here, if any where, we have the history of the deterioration of a nature but ill fitted originally, in a moral point of view, to encounter successfully the trials to which it was subjected. That the proud spirit of which she frequently speaks hides from us in many cases half the agony, and much of the sense of self-humiliation, is tolerably certain; but the important fact is, that the index-hand of her feelings is never made to point in an opposite direction to the actual mental struggle, and that if the writer has little consciousness of the true dignity of virtue, she has honesty enough not to affect the possession of what she looks on as an impracticable fancy of philosophy. In her portraits of those who surrounded her in the intercourse of daily life, she displays no bitterness of spirit; and her womanly malice, which peeps forth here and there, is rather playful than spiteful. This may result in some measure from the *memoir* proceeding from the pen of one who, having been successful herself at a comparatively early epoch

Digitized by Google

of her life, can afford to smile good-naturedly at the abortive attempts from which she escaped unscathed. It is not the first time that good-humour in a successful prince has served to varnish over with an affectation of deeper feelings an inherent selfishness of disposition.

The Empress Catherine II. commences her autobiography with the following words: "Fortune is not so blind as is imagined. She is frequently the consequence of well-chosen and well-ordered measures, not perceived by the public, which have been the forerunners of the event. She is, in a still more marked degree, dependent upon natural character and personal conduct. To render this more evident, I will put the following syllogism: Natural qualities and character shall be the *major;* personal conduct, the *minor;* good or ill fortune, the *conclusion.* Here are two striking instances of this:

PETER III.
CATHERINE II."

After this singular exordium, she proceeds forthwith to detail the pedigree of her husband, and to mention the earliest traits of his character which were brought to her personal notice. But the reader of the present day may find a somewhat more general sketch of the events immediately preceding this epoch a not uninteresting, if not absolutely essential, prelude to the scenes of which she supplies us with so curious and minute a description.

The history of Russia from the reign of Peter the Great to that of Catherine II. is one succession of revolutions. Peter himself, after reigning for a short time jointly with his nearly imbecile elder brother Ivan V., under the regency of their ambitious sister Sophia, in the year 1689 overthrew this tutelage and consigned the regent to a convent, and seven years afterwards, on the death of Ivan, became sole autocrat of Russia. On his death, in 1725, his favourite Prince Mentschikoff, originally a pastry-cook boy of Moscow, raised to the throne the Empress Catherine I., the daughter of a Livonian peasant, the prince's own former mistress, and the mistress and second wife of the deceased czar. Catherine died in 1727; and then something more like a legitimate descent of the crown ensued in the person of Peter II., the grandson of the Czar Peter and son of the unfortunate Czarowitch Alexis. Peter II. only survived till the year 1730. Mentschikoff, who was all-powerful at the commencement of this reign, as throughout the preceding, had intended to marry the young monarch to his own daughter; but the rival influence of the Dolgorouky family, as their present representative records, broke off the projected match, and the favourite of three reigns, invested not long

Digitized by Google

before with the title of generalissimo, was exiled to Siberia, where, Prince Dolgorouky assures us, "he died as a good Christian" in the year 1729. His son was recalled from exile in the succeeding year; and his grandson, the present Prince Alexander Mentschikoff, needs no introduction to the contemporaries of the recent war with Russia. The young Peter II. died on the very day fixed for his marriage with one of the family of Dolgorouky, who now in their turn experienced the frowns of fortune. In conjunction with the family of Galitzyne and others, they waited on the Princess Anne, daughter of Peter the Great's elder brother Ivan and Duchess of Courland, and offered her the crown on condition of her signing an aristocratic constitution. The princess accepted their terms; but, on her arrival at St. Petersburg, threw herself into the arms of the anti-constitutional party, headed by Ostermann and Soltikoff. This latter party prevailed in the struggle; and Prince Dolgorouky was exiled to Siberia, with all his family. After nine years of exile, he was brought back to Novgorod, and executed there, being quartered as a traitor. During the reign of Anne the empire was governed by her lover Biren, a man of the lowest origin, whom she raised to the dignity of Duke of Courland. To this man is assigned the responsibility of the cruelties which disgraced the government of the czarina; but one species of torture seems to have originated in the peculiar humour of Anne herself. Peter the Great had devised the singular punishment of ordering an offender of high rank to be considered and treated as a fool by every body at court. The empress, if the Princess Daskaw is to be believed, outdid her predecessor in the grotesqueness of her conceit. Once she decreed that a certain prince should become *a hen*, to punish him for some trifling misdemeanor; and, for this purpose, she ordered a large basket, stuffed with straw, and hollowed into a nest, with a quantity of eggs inside, to be placed conspicuously in one of the principal rooms at court. The prince was condemned, on pain of death, to sit upon this nest, and to render himself to the last degree ridiculous by imitating the cackling of a hen. This empress died in 1740; and Biren then proclaimed as her successor an infant in the cradle, by the title of Ivan VI. This unfortunate child was the eldest son of another Anne, the daughter of Catherine, sister of the Empress Anne. This second Princess Anne was married to the Duke Antonio Ulric of Brunswick, a dull vegetating German. Biren Duke of Courland governed as regent till, in the autumn of the same year, a revolutionary movement, organised and headed by Marshal Munich, sent Biren into exile in Siberia, and raised the mother of the young Em-

Digitized by Google

peror Ivan to the regency. Little more than a twelvemonth elapsed when another revolution, set on foot for diplomatic purposes by the French ambassador De la Chétardie, and headed by the court surgeon Lestocq, placed on the throne Elizabeth, a daughter of Peter the Great. The regent Anne and her husband were sent into exile in a foreign country; where, with the younger members of their family, they ended their lives. The child Ivan was consigned to the fortress of Schlusselburg, where he remained immured a solitary state-prisoner until two years after the accession of the writer of the memoir before us, when he was secretly put to death, on the discovery of a plot to raise him again to the throne. Marshal Munich was sent to Siberia, and on his road encountered on the Volga the man whom he had himself exiled thither, Biren Duke of Courland, now in his turn recalled to Russia, and, at the commencement of Catherine's narrative, living in privacy at St. Petersburg. Having thus unexpectedly attained to a throne, the Empress Elizabeth looked about for an heir, and fixed upon the prince afterwards known as Peter III. He was the son of a third Princess Anne, the elder sister of the new empress. His father was Charles Frederick Duke of Holstein, nephew of Charles XII. of Sweden. The Duchess of Holstein died two months after the birth of her son, as her son's wife somewhat maliciously suggests, of chagrin at finding herself settled in the little town of Kiel, and having made so poor a match. The future emperor, Peter III., was born in the same insignificant capital, on the 4th of March 1728. A year afterwards, on the 2d of May 1729, a princess was born in the town of Stettin, who was a scion of the insignificant house of Anhalt-Zerbst. This princess was the future Empress of Russia, Catherine II., whose names, on her first baptism into the Protestant communion, were Sophia Augusta Frederika.

There was a relationship between the young prince and princess. The mother of Catherine was sister of the Prince-bishop of Lubeck, Adolphus Frederick, afterwards King of Sweden, who was cousin to the Duke of Holstein, Peter's father. The duke dying when his son had scarcely attained the age of eleven, left him to the guardianship of the prince-bishop. The latter therefore assembled all his family around him to welcome the new addition to their circle. This was in 1739; and among these family visitors came the bishop's mother and sister from Hamburg, bringing with them the little Catherine, then about ten years of age. This, she tells us, was the first time she saw her future husband. The little girl kept her eyes and ears open during the visit, and records a family conversation which she overheard respecting the character of

Digitized by Google

the young duke: that he was already rather given to tippling, and that his attendants had some trouble in keeping him from fuddling himself at the dinner-table,—that he was stubborn and unruly, and had no love for those placed about his person, least of all for his superintendent Brummer, grand-marshal of his court; that, on the other hand, he was not deficient in liveliness,—that his complexion was ill-favoured and sickly. Personal observation confirmed these reports; but, according to her account, the management of the young prince was most injudicious. They professed to treat him as a man, and trammelled him with ceremonial forms until he took refuge in deceit. Each of his attendants sought to monopolise his favour by speaking ill of the others; until the result was, that the prince arrived at a very unfavourable, though very just, opinion respecting them all. He then sought for more congenial associates in those of a lower class, and expended his stock of friendship on his valets.

He had more than his fair share of religious affliction. He was brought up by strict Lutherans; and one of the most difficult of the tasks which his instructors had imposed upon them, was that of driving the unwilling prince to church on the proper occasions, and forcing him through the routine of a ceremonial religion. From this Lutheran purgatory he emerged only to find himself a bad Christian in the ceremonial point of view itself; for he had scarcely become a very imperfect Protestant, when his aunt, the Empress Elizabeth, ordered him to be converted to the Greek Church, as an essential preliminary to his formal adoption as heir-presumptive of the crown of Russia. The young victim revenged himself in a characteristic manner; he took to arguing gravely every disputed point; and after having driven his instructors nearly to desperation by his new-born theologic zeal, all at once quietly submitted to his fate, venting his dissatisfaction in frequent intimations of his preference of Sweden to Russia. He had a professor to teach him history and the mathematics; but he made buffoons of his teachers; and the only master who really made any way in his instruction was the *maître-de-ballet*, who taught him to dance. These might be simply the natural escapades of an odd-tempered ill-managed boy; but his drinking habit was more serious, and probably led to that evident enfeeblement of intellect which reduced him to a condition little better than that of a simpleton. He began by drilling incessantly a couple of unfortunate servants. He was ever raising or degrading them in imaginary military ranks. He was even more a child when he attained the age of sixteen than at eleven. Through the whole period

Digitized by Google

over which the autobiography carries us we have a repetition, with very few varieties, of the same childish amusements. He had an army of soldiers, made out of wood, lead, and various other substances. To these he played drill-sergeant regularly day and night, regulating their movements by pieces of string attached to them; and at this child's game he expected his wife and her maids-of-honour and ladies-in-waiting to be attentive observers and occasional participators. He was equally fond of dolls and puppet-shows, and made a sort of mystery of his games with the former. During the daytime they were concealed in and under the bed; after supper the grand duke betook himself to bed, and seated therein with his wife, the lady-in-waiting locked the door, and then all three devoted themselves to his playthings and dolls, sometimes until one or two o'clock in the morning. On one of these occasions the lady who acted as *gouvernante* of the grand duke's establishment gained some inkling of the nocturnal revel, and came herself and knocked at the door at about the midnight hour. Before the door could be opened, the bed and floor had to be cleared of playthings and dolls; and the irritated *gouvernante*, tired of waiting, threatened to complain to the empress of these late hours. He took to playing on the violin and dancing with his servants, there being the slight drawback to the one performance, that his imperial highness did not know a note of music. He amused himself once with cracking a large coachman's whip in his room, making his valets fly about in all directions to avoid being hit by it. At last he gave himself a severe lash on the face, and then ran in the utmost distress to his wife for advice on this disfigurement. She supplied him with a salve which hid the wound, and by an ingenious evasion covered his embarrassment when the *gouvernante's* husband asked him to wipe his face. Some of his fancies were more disagreeable. He hit upon the idea of setting up a kennel of dogs in his apartments; and expended a wonderful amount of perseverance in training them properly for the chase, scouring with them full-cry, whip in hand, up and down the only two rooms which his wife and himself had at their disposal. He interspersed these mock hunts with performances on his violin; and then would betake himself to the chastisement of his unlucky dogs, on whom he expended a large amount of brutality. On one occasion, Catherine, unable to bear the cries of the animals, opened the door of her bedroom, which led to the scene of these tortures, and found a poor little dog, which the grand duke was holding in the air by its neck, and a Calmuck boy by the tail, while the former was striking it with his whole force with his whip. Her interference only increased

Digitized by Google

the violence of the blows; and she retreated to her chamber, unable, she assures us, to endure the sight. Such a feeling as she then manifested, invariably, she tells us, provoked his marked contempt. The stench from the kennel was nearly insupportable, as it was only just outside their bedroom. The royal palaces appear to have been greatly infested with rats and mice, not to speak of other vermin. Once Catherine was surprised at seeing a rat hanging up in her room. On inquiring, the grand duke explained that the rat had eaten up two of his composite sentinels while on guard on his toy ramparts; one of his dogs had caught the delinquent, and he was now undergoing the extreme rigour of martial law, and was to hang there three days in public to deter similar offenders. She burst out laughing at this explanation; which so offended her husband, that she was obliged to excuse herself on the plea of feminine ignorance of military usages. Add to these childish imbecilities in a grown-up and married man his daily drunkenness and other delinquencies, to which we shall presently allude, and some idea will be gathered of the sort of husband whom the Empress Elizabeth had provided for the young Princess of Anhalt.

How the match was first projected and arranged does not appear; for Catherine's narrative carries us at once to the month of February 1744, when, accompanied by her mother, she arrived at the court of Russia as the affianced of this delightful prince. She had not quite completed her fifteenth year when she was thus carried into a strange country, at the mercy of court intrigue, and bound up to a companion whom at the best she could but pity and despise. In such a position, the person to whom the young stranger would naturally look for protection and advice would be the empress herself. What, then, was her hope from that quarter?

The character of the Czarina Elizabeth, as set forth in the disconnected details and occasional hints scattered through the autobiography, is not an unkindly portraiture. Taking into consideration how much more might with justice have been said, it is evident that Catherine has placed a considerable restraint upon her satirical vein in speaking of her imperial predecessor. Possibly this leniency may have arisen in part from the recollection of some kindnesses received from the empress; but much more probably it springs from the wise reluctance of the Czarina Catherine to paint in too glaring colours those vices and foibles of the Czarina Elizabeth of which she was conscious of being herself equally guilty. It will have struck any English reader of Russian history as a remarkable circumstance that so many female sovereigns should have ascended

Digitized by Google

the throne during so short a period, and that on the whole their reigns should be more cherished in the memories of Russians than those of the sovereigns of the other sex. A rather droll observation in the introduction supplied by the translator of Prince Dolgorouky's little work on the Russian nobility, may perhaps throw some light on this. Speaking of the ascendency of the German element during some of these reigns, he remarks, that "it was easier for the gallant Russian noblemen during the reigns of women to beat the Germans, not very acceptable in love-matters." Without venturing to indorse the last part of this sentence, we may be disposed to admit that there is much truth in the former portion; and that the extent to which Russia was governed by the Russians, and in accordance with Russian sympathies, was regulated very much by the predominance or the reverse of Russian favourites at the courts of the czarinas. The czars had recourse to German secretaries of state, who led their sympathies into German channels; the czarinas chose lovers out of their Russian subjects of all ranks, and often committed to them the guidance of the state. The predecessors of Elizabeth had all boasted of one or more such favourites; but this empress carried the thing to an extent hitherto unequalled. Historians tell us that before her accession she led a life of gross sensuality, and that she was only roused to the exertion which placed her on the throne by the report that it was the intention of the regent Anne to make her an ascetic *malgré lui* by immuring her in a convent. On ascending the throne, she established her favouritism on a regular system. There was the reigning favourite, who was a sort of premier of a staff of lovers as well as of ministers; and there would often be a sort of leader of the opposition favourites, who might hope in time to supersede wholly his rival in love and power. Each of these continually enlisted in his service fresh recruits, who under and for his interest gained in succession a share in the czarina's favour, and employed their influence to countermine the other party. The ministers of state and expectant statesmen found it necessary to ally themselves to one or other of these favourites, and the foreign ambassadors followed their example. There would be the favourite who adhered to the Austrian or French, and the favourite who countenanced the Prussian or English alliance. Favourites, ministers, sub-favourites, ambassadors, court-ladies, and *valets-de-chambre* intrigued together and caballed against each other; and the empress, the centre and object of all their machinations and assiduities, swayed hither and thither according to the predominant personal fancy of the hour, retaining certain general likes and dislikes of her own,

Digitized by Google

but as often as not suffering them to lie in abeyance in condescension to the wishes of a reigning favourite.

That Elizabeth was a rather weak woman, will be apparent enough from this; we cannot, however, go so far as a statesman of the time, when he assured Catherine in a moment of confidence that the empress was no better than a fool. That she was a selfish woman we should have expected from her sensual tendencies; and Catherine gives us incidentally many proofs of this being the case. When in a good temper, she was gracious and even energetically kind; when in a bad one, she was preeminently capricious and absurd. But her good-nature was apt to be wanting when most needed, and thoughtfulness and consideration for others in emergencies were never allowed for a moment to stand in the way of the selfish object of the hour. She attended carefully to the ceremonial part of religion, and took especial care that others should do so too; but practical religion was as strange to her as would have been the suggestions of pity and humanity in the cases of those whom she consigned to dungeons or Siberia. Yet she liked the affectation of being a humane monarch, and prided herself on never having put any one to death for political offences, though she afforded very many every opportunity of dying. She tolerated her nephew Peter,—though she detested Holstein, and had a deep contempt for his intellect, and disgust for his idiotic drunkenness,—being perhaps not unwilling to have the contrast of his greater moral degradation constantly before the eyes of her subjects, as an incentive to increased aspirations for the continuance of her own reign. Towards Catherine she was less favourably disposed. She had woman's wit enough to discover at an early period the superior talents and enterprising character of her new niece, however carefully and adroitly the latter sought to hide them under the affectation of being a gentle timid girl. She saw plainly enough who would be the real ruler of Russia if Catherine was the wife of her nephew when he ascended the throne; she was perhaps not sorry that he had such an adviser to look to for the future; but she was profoundly jealous of this influence and these talents being exerted during her own reign. She was conscious of Catherine's attractions of person and manners, as well as of her mental qualities, and had all a woman's jealousy of their effect on the hearts of her faithful Russian subjects. She was well enough content that Catherine should be what she was; but she did not wish the fame of her superiority to become widely spread. She therefore frequently treated her with marked contempt, and made it the fashion at court to do so. She said spiteful things to and of her, backed her husband against her, notwithstanding his transparent follies;

Digitized by Google

and although she relented at times, and let her real sentiments towards Catherine be perceived, she shut her out from her confidence, kept her a sort of state prisoner, drove from her all for whom she exhibited any preference, and contrived on the whole to render her young niece's life a very miserable as well as a very dull one.

Nor was Catherine more fortunate in her other natural adviser, — her own mother. She was a most absurd person, full of pretension, delighting in intrigue, political and private; greedy to such an extent that she actually pillaged her own daughter's wedding wardrobe; not utterly bad-hearted, but intensely selfish, and of a very indifferent temper. She had a set of fixed notions—somewhat of the Mrs. Nickleby order—which nothing could displace. A brother of hers had died in Russia, and her firm impression and paramount grievance was that he had been killed by the Russian doctors bleeding him for the small-pox. Her objection to bleeding had some countenance in the prevalence of the practice in Russia at this period, of which the autobiography gives frequent illustrations. But the absurd inference which she drew from the supposed murder of her brother was, that every case of illness was an incipient small-pox, and that the drawing of blood would consequently lead to similar fatal results. It is a pleasant sequel to this fancy of the lady, that before she left Russia she took it into her head to be bled herself; for what cause was matter of vain surmise to her daughter, whom she accused of indifference to her condition. Before her departure she contrived to injure Catherine's prospects as much as was possible by her insolence, her intrigues, and her blunders. She offended the elderly dignitaries of the grand duke's household by a piece of thoughtless selfishness. On one of their journeys, being tired of riding in a carriage alone with her daughter, she consulted with some young courtiers in attendance, and they fitted up one of the carriages in which the beds were transported so as to make a *char-à-banc* for eight. Into this Catherine, her mother, and the young men of their party only were admitted; and thus they performed the rest of the journey, laughing and talking together, to the great displeasure of the elderly Grand Marshal Brummer, Grand Chamberlain Berkholz, and Countess Roumianzoff, who followed behind in stiff gloom in another carriage. She was at first on very gracious terms with her intended son-in-law; but soon there came a rupture and a singular scene between two very foolish people. One day, Catherine tells us, when "the grand duke had entered my mother's and my chamber, while the former was writing and had her cash-box open by the side of her, he was curious to examine it. My mother told him

Digitized by Google

not to touch it, and so he went skipping through the room to the other side; but in skipping hither and thither to make me laugh, he caught the lid of the cash-box and upset it. Then my mother flew into a passion, and there were violent words between them. My mother accused him of having purposely upset her cash-box, and he exclaimed against the injustice of her accusation; both of them addressing themselves to me, and appealing to my testimony. As for me, knowing my mother's temper, I feared being cuffed if I did not side with her; and not wishing either to tell a lie or disoblige the grand duke, I found myself between two fires. Still, I said to my mother that it appeared to me there was no deliberate intention on the part of the grand duke, but that in skipping his dress had caught the lid of the cash-box, which was placed on a little stool. Thereupon my mother took *me* to task; for when she was in a passion she must quarrel with some one. I held my tongue, and began to cry. The grand duke, seeing that all the anger of my mother fell upon me because I had borne witness in his favour, and that I was in tears, accused my mother of injustice, *et traita sa colère de furie;* on which she told him that he was a very ill-bred little boy. Indeed, it would have been difficult to push the quarrel further without their coming to actual blows. From this time the grand duke took a dislike to my mother, and never forgot this quarrel; and my mother also on her side retained a grudge to him." And then our autobiographer proceeds to explain to us how troublesome this smouldering warfare became to her in her position relatively to the two. With the empress, Catherine's mother got on still worse; for besides the selfishness which marked her treatment of her daughter, and to which the czarina had the ordinary keen sensitiveness of one who sees her own foibles travestied by another, there was the forbidden ground of Russian politics, on which the sister of the Prince-Bishop of Lubeck was fond of trespassing. Some of her intrigues coming to the ears of the czarina, the little household was startled by an imperial visit. One day after dinner, the grand duke being with Catherine and her mother in their apartment, the empress entered suddenly, and told the elder lady to follow her into another room. Lestocq, the former court-surgeon, whose services in forwarding her elevation to the crown had procured him one of the posts of favourite and the title of count, followed the empress. The grand duke and Catherine—this was before their marriage—seated themselves in a window to await the result. The conversation lasted for some time; and they saw Lestocq leave the place. They were laughing together at the time; and on his perceiving this, he approached the window and said, "This great

Digitized by Google

merriment will be put an end to presently." Then, turning to Catherine, he added, "Pack up your things; you are to be sent off at once, back to your own home." The grand duke wanted to know the reason; he replied, "That you will learn afterwards," and departed on his mission. The young people were left to their own conjectures on the subject. He talked it over, she thought it over. "If your mother is in fault," said he, "you are not so." "My duty," replied the young lady impressively, "is to follow my mother, and to do what she shall bid me." She saw plainly, she informs us, that her departure would grieve him little. "For my part," continues the grand duchess expectant, "after what I knew of him, he was a matter of tolerable indifference to me; *but not so the crown of Russia!*" At length the door opened, and the empress reëntered, very red in the face, and looking much irritated: the lady-mother followed her, with eyes red and wet with crying. Peter and Catherine hastened to descend from the window, where, as she expresses it, they had been "perched;" but this having to be effected from a considerable height, the empress's ill-temper evaporated at the sight, and smiling, she embraced them both and departed. And thus happily ended what at first looked so ominous.

The marriage of Catherine did not take place till a year and a half from the time of her arrival in Russia; and during this interval she herself had an attack of pleurisy, which her mother insisted was the small-pox, and obstinately prohibited bleeding until the czarina herself arrived, and sitting down on the bed, had the operation performed. When Catherine returned to consciousness, she found herself supported in the arms of the empress, who during this illness exhibited much kindness and feeling; probably through antagonism to Catherine's mother, who was so callous and wrong-headed as to seize this occasion to appropriate a piece of blue-and-silver stuff given to her daughter by her uncle. Catherine naturally set great store on it; and though she dutifully gave it up, the court-ladies were scandalised at the conduct of her mother, and the empress sought to comfort her by a present of *several* pieces of gorgeous stuff, one of them blue-and-silver. The young princess, however, made political capital out of her illness; for lying still with her eyes closed, the court-ladies thought her asleep, and conversed so freely together, that she was made acquainted with a considerable amount of useful information respecting the court. She gained credit also by another piece of adroitness. When the complaint was at its height, her mother, with her usual stupidity, wished to send for a Lutheran confessor; but the cunning little girl begged to

Digitized by Google

have the Greek priest to whom her conversion had been assigned. "This," she remarks, "raised me in the opinion of the empress and all the court." The grand duke in his turn also sickened with the small-pox; and when he reappeared on the scene, was pronounced by Catherine, *to herself*, to be perfectly hideous. She made, however, a pleasant little speech to him on the occasion, and quite made up her mind to marry him for the ulterior prospects. Her mother availed herself of this politic resignation to assure the empress that her daughter had no personal repugnance to the grand duke. So the marriage took place, and the mother of Catherine departed homewards.

The young grand duchess had now fairly entered on her new life, and a few additional details will show us what it was. We have seen what the empress was; all we need add is, that she treated the heir to the throne and his wife as state prisoners, never letting them, if possible, know any thing of what was going on around them. Events of importance which took place in some other part of their own palace they only learnt by accident. Every one placed in attendance on them was expected to play the spy; and they lived in perpetual dread of some innocent word or action being misinterpreted or misreported to the czarina. The grand duke passed his time among his dolls, wooden soldiers, and drinking companions. His old superintendents had departed on his marriage, Brummer endeavouring before leaving to enlist Catherine in the forlorn work of reforming her husband. This she peremptorily declined, saying she should only make him dislike her. His new attendants had fewer scruples than Brummer, and abetted every vice which did not expose themselves to the czarina's displeasure. Peter began his acquaintance with Catherine, on her arrival in Russia, by sedulously calling her 'cousin,' and enlarging on the advantage which such a relationship gave him in unbosoming himself to her. The first fact of which he made her the confidant was, that he had been in love with a maid-of-honour, who had been removed from court to attend her mother in her exile to Siberia. He would have preferred marrying this young lady; but was now content to put up with Catherine herself, since his aunt wished it. The ardour of his attentions to his *fiancée* soon cooled, and directly after the marriage he did not conceal his entire indifference to her. This was trying enough to her *amour-propre*, as she says she was good-looking enough, and engaged the affections of every one else. He rendered this distaste more unbearable by giving it the form of a constant succession of fits of passionate devotion to each of her ladies-in-waiting in turn. However plain, awkward, or unprepossessing they might be, they were ostentatiously preferred to his

Digitized by Google

wife, till tears of vexation forced themselves involuntarily into her eyes. Though his brief affection had long vanished, his confidences to Catherine continued, and shaping themselves according to each new fancy, became almost maddening to a woman of her proud spirit. If at night she pretended to be asleep to avoid appearing in the degrading position of a conscious listener to his panegyrics of the latest object of his passion, he struck her violently with his fist to awake her. Still, however much he ill-treated her, he flew to her in every emergency; *Madame la Ressource* he styled her, from her ingenuity in advising him how to get out of his scrapes. He would come scampering to her room, pour forth his woes, listen to her advice, and immediately it was given, scamper off again as fast as he came. During the greater part of their interviews he was in an earlier or later stage of drunkenness, and would babble forth the most preposterous nonsense. He was not at first a liar, his wife intimates, but became so by degrees. One fiction in which he delighted was an imaginary campaign undertaken by him in his father's lifetime, at the head of an army, to chastise some "Bohemians." He would dilate on his achievements in this campaign, first of all to those who were unacquainted with the chronology of his early life; then he ventured on the story in Catherine's presence, who reminded him in her quiet satirical vein that he was only eleven years old when his father died, and that such a proceeding on the part of the late duke was as absurd as inconceivable. He flew into a passion, accused her of making him appear a liar in the eyes of the whole court, and at length grew so audacious as frequently to repeat the story in her presence. We find that this was a favourite *gasconade* on the part of Peter through his whole life. The Princess Daskaw tells us that he repeated it one day, soon after his accession to the throne, to the Austrian ambassador. The latter was utterly bewildered, not knowing in the first place whether the czar meant by "Bohemians" gipsies or the subjects of his own mistress.

Condemned to pass her days with such a husband, the grand duchess took counsel with herself, and in two or three passages has recorded the results of these communings. "I said to myself," she writes, "that with such a man as this I could not fail to be very unhappy, if I gave way to feelings of tenderness towards him to be so ill repaid; and that I should only die of jealousy, without any one being the better for it. I strove, then, to subdue my *amour-propre* so as not to be jealous of a man who loved me not; but to effect this, the only way was not to love him at all. If he had desired my love, the thing would not have been difficult for him to attain. I was

Digitized by Google

naturally disposed and accustomed to fulfil my duty: but for this to be possible, my husband must at least have common sense; and this he had not." Elsewhere she tells us that she resolved to be very careful about the confidential disclosures which from time to time the grand duke, who could not live without a confidant, poured into her ears. Some of these were worth listening to for the political hints which they conveyed to an intelligent mind such as hers, however little the grand duke himself saw in them. To foster in him this habit with respect to weightier matters, she sought to impress on his mind the idea that she was one on whom he could implicitly rely, and to whom he could tell every thing without fear of any ill consequences to himself from her want of discretion. "In this," she continues, "I was for some time successful; *au reste*, I behaved as amiably as I could to every body, and made a study of gaining friends, or at least disarming unfriendliness in those whom I could in the least suspect of being ill-disposed towards me. I displayed no preference for any party, mixed myself up in nothing, had always a tranquil demeanour, and much courteous attention and politeness for every one; and as I was naturally very lively, I saw with pleasure that I gained daily in the affection of the public, who looked upon me as an interesting child, and one not deficient in understanding. I exhibited an unlimited obedience to the empress, the most profound respect to the grand duke; and I studied most earnestly to gain the affection of the public."

The neglect of her husband had perhaps, in one respect, a fortunate effect on the future prosperity of Russia under her government. She was, as she frankly admits in many passages, naturally disposed to pleasure and trifling amusements; indeed, there seems to have been a strong vein of French frivolity and heartlessness in her from the beginning. But these tendencies were curbed and moderated by the lack of opportunities of indulging them. Left to herself, and as much as possible deprived of congenial associates, she betook herself to books, and cultivated with great ardour that stronger and more intellectual side of her character, which had already, while she was at Hamburg, induced the Swedish Count Gyllenburg to say that she had a philosophical turn of mind. When the count came on a mission to Russia, soon after Catherine's own arrival, he asked her on his first visit, "How went on her philosophy in this vortex in which she lived?" She replied by giving him an account of her studies. A philosopher of fifteen, he observed, had one study yet before her—the knowledge of herself; he pointed out how necessary this was in the trying circumstances in which she was placed, and recommended to her, as a course

Digitized by Google

of reading, Plutarch's lives, the life of Cicero, and Montesquieu's work on the causes of the greatness and fall of the Roman republic. She immediately set about procuring these books (though she had some difficulty in so doing at St. Petersburg); and as a proof to the count that she had already made some progress in self-knowledge, she drew up her own character, and presented it to him for perusal: she entitled it, "Portrait of the Philosopher of Fifteen." He read it, and returned it again to her in a few days with some remarks and advice of his own appended. Some years afterwards she accidentally came across this manuscript portrait, and was astonished to find how keen an insight into herself on her part it displayed. After her marriage, for some time she did nothing but read. She began with a romance entitled *Tiran le blanc*, and for a whole year she read only romances. When thoroughly tired of them, she stumbled by chance on the letters of Madame de Sévigné, which she devoured. Then she took to the works of Voltaire, and thenceforward was more select in her reading. At a somewhat later period we find her reading through, in the desperation of *ennui*, a history of Germany, by Father Barre, Canon of St. Geneviève, in nine quarto volumes. She took a week to each volume, and then settled down into the works of Plato! Besides this somewhat ponderous course of study, she did not fail to take great pains to master the Russian language: this was not merely a most useful present acquisition, but a strong bond of sympathy for the future with the Russian public. She greatly delighted in horse-exercise, and soon became a most accomplished horsewoman. There was a difference between her and the empress arising out of this; for she liked to ride in man's fashion, which the empress discouraged: so the grand duchess hit on a mechanical contrivance by which she could shift the pommel, and so follow her own fancy when once out of the czarina's sight.

Catherine had ere long opportunities of showing how her mind had profited by the lessons of Count Gyllenburg and her own studies. Although the grand duke was, with reference to the affairs of Russia, sedulously kept in the dark, he had official duties of his own to perform which caused him no little embarrassment. As Duke of Holstein, the administration of that principality passed nominally into his hands on attaining his majority. He had resident in Russia a secretary of state, who transacted with him the formal part of the ducal functions. Peter was devotedly attached to Holstein and all Holsteiners, and surrounded himself with them as much as the empress would permit. But he was not equally fond of the amount of business and occasional reflection which his being

Digitized by Google

the ruler of this beloved Holstein entailed upon him. He would wake up his wife with glee, and make her partake of a fresh arrival of Holstein oysters; but arrivals of business from that country interfered sorely with his daily course of life. He was always getting into debt; spending his money, however, on his own gratifications, or losing it at gambling. His duchy was reported to be in much the same state of financial embarrassment; and the court of Denmark endeavoured to exaggerate these deficiencies in the eyes of the grand duke, so as to induce him to barter Holstein for Oldenburg. It is characteristic of Peter, that notwithstanding his undoubted affection for the former country, he lent a rather favourable ear to this proposition, prompted by his desire of getting rid of an immediate difficulty. One of the most powerful statesmen at the Russian court favoured the project; and it appeared not unlikely to be carried out, when *Madame la Ressource*, on the application of her husband, applied her clearer brains to the matter, and pointed out to the grand duke the doubts which existed respecting the extent of the financial difficulties of Holstein, and the odium which his abandonment of his native principality would bring upon him. Peter bethought himself of consulting the Count de Bernis, the Austrian ambassador, a man whose talents and character had inspired him as well as Catherine with respect and admiration. He then begged his wife to talk over the matter with the count herself. This she did; and after listening to her arguments, the count replied, "As ambassador I have no instructions on this point; but as Count de Bernis I think that you are right." He also told the grand duke apart that all that he could say to him on the matter was, that his wife was right, and that he would do well to listen to her. This settled the business. In another instance in which she was consulted respecting the affairs of Holstein, Catherine's advice met with less acceptance, the grand duke suffering himself to be persuaded by a certain unworthy Holstein favourite of the name of Brockdorf to send orders into his principality to arrest and throw into a prison a leading statesman, on the chance of persons being then found willing to come forward to accuse him of peculation. Catherine, however, found herself thrust into a still more responsible position with respect to her husband's duchy. One day he came scampering into her room, followed by his Holstein secretary; the latter holding a piece of paper in his hand. Peter complained loudly to his wife that he had taken too much wine the night before, and had not recovered from its effects, and that he was compelled to take refuge with her from the persecutions of his minister. The latter earnestly explained that all he wanted was his highness's

Digitized by Google

attention for a minute, and his answer, one way or the other, to the questions arising on this paper. Catherine interposed, and begged the secretary to read the paper, which he did; and as the questions arose, she quietly said, "Yes," or "No;" and so the whole was finished in a minute or two, to the great delight of the secretary, who held up this example to the grand duke. Peter was enchanted at having the trouble of making up his mind taken off his hands; and ordered the secretary in future to bring all such papers to his wife, and act on her decision. This went on till, finding Brockdorf's counsels still paramount, the grand duchess bethought her of appealing privately to the empress against this pernicious influence. The czarina listened to her detailed account of the affairs of Holstein, and then observed dryly, "You appear to be very well acquainted with that country." Catherine explained her husband's orders to her; but it was evident that Elizabeth mistrusted her growing influence, and that hostile tongues had been busy against her. Another confidence of her husband related to a project on the part of an officer of desperate character, to which Peter had been persuaded to listen, for making away with the Empress Elizabeth, and raising him to the throne at once. The plot being partially discovered, Peter remained in an agony of apprehension for some days, lest he should be incriminated in the confessions of the arrested; but these proving faithful, his joy was proportionally excessive.

Catherine herself, notwithstanding all the efforts made by the empress to keep her in the background, had her share in the political intrigues of the court. When she came to Russia there were two great political parties. One was headed by the minister for foreign affairs and vice-chancellor, Count Bestoujeff Rumine, who was for an alliance with the courts of Vienna, Saxony, and England. Opposed to him was a party headed by the French ambassador, the Marquis de la Chétardie, to which Lestocq gave his support. This faction backed the views of France, Sweden, and Prussia, and counted among its most powerful members Count Michael Woronzoff, afterwards chancellor of the empire. He was married to a niece of the Empress Catherine I., an attendant of the Empress Elizabeth, and like her a woman of indifferent morals. The reigning favourite was the grand huntsman, Count Alexis Razoumovsky, originally a chorister in the court-chapel. The empress, before her accession to the throne, took a fancy to him, and, as Prince Dolgorouky affirms, after she became empress, married him privately in the church of a village called Perovo, near Moscow. He had several children by Elizabeth, all of whom died in childhood except a daughter, whom, in the reign of Catherine II., Alexis

Digitized by Google

Orloff decoyed from her residence in Italy, and delivered into the hands of his royal mistress, who committed her to close imprisonment. At this time Catherine was favourably disposed to the Razoumovskys, the brother of the count making silent love to her, and both brothers being, she assures us, very generally popular. We have a glimpse of the grand huntsman, in a brocaded dressing-gown, seated at table with the empress and a select party of intimates in her private room. For this we are indebted to the curious ingenuity of the Grand Duke Peter, who bored several holes in the wall between this room and his own, and invited his wife and all the ladies of the household to view the party of exclusives. Catherine discreetly refused to avail herself of the offer, and thus escaped part of the storm which fell on their heads a few days afterwards, when the czarina discovered her nephew's impertinence.

Besides the grand huntsman, there was the rising influence of the Schouvaloff family, three of whom rose to the post of favourite. Counts Alexander and Peter are represented by Prince Dolgorouky as cruel and avaricious men; but he says that Count Peter was a most able war-minister; he was also a correspondent of Voltaire, and persuaded him to write his life of Peter the Great, for which the Empress Elizabeth, through this medium, furnished many of the materials. The cousin of the Counts Schouvaloff, Ivan Ivanovitch Schouvaloff, who refused a title, rose into favour a few years later. Catherine rejoiced in his rise, for she had seen him constantly with a book in his hand; and he ultimately became "the chief protector of the Russian literature, and one of the most witty and well-instructed men of his time." In the latter part of her autobiography we find all the Schouvaloffs bitterly hostile to Catherine; but at first her chief political enemy was the Count Bestoujeff. Catherine gives no very amiable character of him; but admits he was a man of great ability, and really patriotic in his feelings. Her marriage had been the work of his enemies, and the grand duchess was thus thrown into their ranks. After a time, however, things shifted, and friendly relations were established between her and the count; until at last there ensued a secret correspondence between them on state affairs and the future of Russia, which caused much anxiety to Catherine when Bestoujeff succumbed to the influence of his adversaries, and was arrested and thrown into prison. He fell before a diplomatic cabal, set on foot because he would not allow Russia to become a principal in the war against Prussia. Then it was she burnt all her papers, and among them the "Portrait of the Philosopher of Fifteen." Another powerful favourite had fallen before Bestoujeff's overthrow.

Digitized by Google

"One evening," writes the grand duchess, "when we were at the gaming-table in the empress's apartment, I saw Count Lestocq. I approached to speak to him, when he said to me in an under tone, 'Don't come near me, I am a suspected man.' I thought he was joking, and asked what he meant by that. He replied, 'I tell you again, with all seriousness, not to come near me; for I am a suspected man, who must be avoided.'" This was on a Friday; on Sunday Catherine learnt that the count and his wife had been arrested and carried to a fortress as prisoners of state. Lestocq was accused of having received a bribe of 1000 roubles from the King of Prussia, and of having poisoned an accomplice who might have betrayed him. He tried to destroy himself by abstinence from food, but was compelled by force to eat. After being put to the torture, he was banished to Siberia. Such was the fate of the man to whom Elizabeth owed her throne; and the appalling suddenness of the catastrophe may well serve as an example of the vicissitudes to which those who depended on the favour of a despotic sovereign were exposed.

Standing on so slippery an eminence, it is not to be imagined that Catherine felt very secure, or easy in her mind as to the possible conduct of the empress towards her. We have spoken of Elizabeth's caprices with her niece. These took at first the form of lectures to her against getting into debt. She herself, she said, had never got into debt when she was a princess, in the time of the Empress Anne. Catherine was not naturally economical, and had many claims on her generosity. Her husband was always wanting presents, and never giving any in return; the lady-superintendents of her wardrobe were also extravagant; so that the grand duchess had more than once to undergo this biting reference to the days of the Empress Anne. This, indeed, was the czarina's favourite theme, and every reprimand for impropriety of conduct or speech always wound up with the assurance that she (the czarina) never would have presumed to do or say such and such a thing in the days of the Empress Anne. Sometimes this formula came in very drolly. Thus, in one of her hunts, there were no hares to be found. In a passion, she sent for the unfortunate man who was lord of the district, and loaded him with abuse. He stood before her pale and trembling. The grand duke and duchess approached to kiss her hand; she embraced them, and then went on with her tirade. When she was angry, no one was safe from her remarks. Her flow of words was astonishing. Among other things, she said she was perfectly well acquainted with the management of land,—the reign of the Empress Anne had taught her that; that, having but little, she had been careful in her expenditure;

Digitized by Google

that if she had made debts, she would have been in fear of being damned; that if she had died then in debt, no one would have discharged it, and her soul would have gone to hell, which she by no means desired; that to avoid this, in-doors, and when she was not compelled to do otherwise, she had worn very plain dresses—which she proceeded to describe,—and that she took care not to put on expensive dresses when in the country or on a journey. This was a reflection on Catherine, who had on a dress of lilac and silver. She discoursed on in this manner, no one else saying a word, for some three-quarters of an hour. Then luckily a court-fool came in and put a stop to it. He brought her a little porcupine, and presented it in his hat. She approached him to look at it; but as soon as she saw it, she uttered a piercing cry, said it resembled a mouse, and ran away as fast as her legs could carry her, "for she was mortally afraid of mice." They saw her no more that day, and she dined by herself.

There was a magic spell, however, which Catherine learnt from a court-lady, that never failed to appease any outbreak of temper on the part of the czarina against herself. She had only to say in Russian, "I beg your pardon, madame," and the storm ceased.

We regret that our space does not allow us to do justice to the curious portraits which the grand duchess draws of the successive ladies of the bedchamber in waiting, at the mercy of whose good or ill offices she was to a great degree placed. The description of the doings and misdoings of Monsieur and Madame Tchoglodoff, their conjugal jealousies and infidelities, crass but generally harmless stupidity, insolence, and final docility, is worthy of the pen of Dickens, and would be as ludicrous as any thing in his works, if there were not a tragic as well as comic side to the picture. For it was under the reign of Madame Tchoglodoff, and with the encouragement of her express order on the part of the empress, that Catherine first proved faithless to her duty as a wife. The story of her fall is told by herself in simple and undisguised language; and no one who reads her account of the conduct of her husband, and of the gross laxity of morals in this respect among all around her, will be surprised that, with her natural temperament, she should have succumbed to the tempter. Her seducer, she tells us, was Sergius Soltikoff, a younger son of one of the highest families in Russia, which had been connected by marriage with the imperial family itself. Of Sergius, the grand duchess says that he was *beau comme le jour;* that he had no lack either of understanding, or of that *savoir-faire*, ease of manners, and versatility which a life at court brings with it. He was twenty-

Digitized by Google

six years of age, and the most *distingué* cavalier in the grand-ducal and imperial courts. He knew how to put a veil over his defects, the greatest of which, she tells us, were "a spirit of intrigue and a want of principle." Elsewhere she calls him *un démon en fait d'intrigue.* This man disclosed his passion during a concert. Catherine bade him think of his own wife, to whom he was supposed to be devotedly attached. He replied, that all was not gold that glittered, and that he paid dearly for a moment of blindness. "I did all in my power," she continues, "to make him give up his idea,—I really thought to succeed in doing so. I felt wretched. Unhappily I listened to him." "In all this," she adds with bitter sarcasm, "*il n'était pas question du cher mari,* for it was a well-known and received fact that he was not one to be loved, even by those who were the objects of his attentions; these were incessant, and it might be said that he made love to every woman. It was only she who in name was his that was excepted from his devotion." Though, however, no compunction on the score of her husband held her back, her own pride gave her much uneasiness. "I was very discontented with myself," she writes. "I had thought I could govern and regulate both his (Soltikoff's) head and mine; and I found that both tasks were difficult, not to say hopeless." The grand duke soon surmised the truth; but though he threw out hints from time to time which somewhat disturbed Catherine and her lovers, he cared too little about the matter to exert himself further. Possibly he guessed, what Catherine now discloses, that the empress herself had taken more than a passive part in promoting such a catastrophe; though the direct intimation of her wishes happened to arrive a little later than the time when they had been already accomplished. Through Madame Tchoglodoff she expressed her displeasure at the grand duchess not having become a mother, and bade her choose between Soltikoff and another young courtier who was his bosom friend, Léon Narichkine. No open confidences passed between the imperial personages on the subject, but it was soon tacitly understood that the grand duchess had made her choice. The birth of a son, of whom the grand duke was nominally the father, exactly met the views of the czarina. The narrative before us, however, leaves no doubt that the real father of the Emperor Paul, and the ancestor of the present royal family of Russia, was the young nobleman Sergius Soltikoff. Beyond the original stain of illegitimacy, there is little for the so-called Romanoffs to regret in this affiliation. If they can no longer contend against the doubts which have always surrounded their descent from Peter the Great, they can now derive their lineage from a purely Russian

Digitized by Google

source of respectable antiquity on one side, and on the other they may hope to inherit some of the talents, while they avoid the vices, of her who was one of the ablest sovereigns that ever wielded a European sceptre.

The birth of Paul was accompanied by a display of heartless selfishness in the highest quarter, which goes far in palliating the conduct of the grand duchess. No sooner was the child born than the empress hurried away with it into her own apartment, followed by all whose services were most needed by the mother. Elizabeth detained them in attendance, she herself absorbed in attention to the new-born heir to the crown; while for three hours Catherine was left helpless and unassisted, in a thorough draught, and burning with a feverish thirst. How she ever survived this desertion is, as one of the court-ladies considered it, marvellous. This neglect was repeated during all the time of her recovery, and subsequently on a similar occasion; while of her child she obtained only a momentary glance now and then, the empress always hurrying him away again to her room, where he was nearly suffocated in wrappings, to the serious detriment of his health. After her convalescence, Catherine seems to have become reckless under this treatment. She felt she was nobody, and that the czarina cared little whether she lived or died now that the line of succession had been secured. When her own father died, she had been reproved by the empress for indulging in too prolonged a grief for his loss, as he was not a sovereign prince of Europe. On another occasion, Elizabeth had allowed her to remain shivering by her side in the cathedral, while she sent for a box of wrappings, selected one for herself, and sent back the rest, having in a marked manner shown her consciousness of Catherine's sufferings. An occasional embrace, and a flood of sensibility, as brief in duration as rare in occurrence, were poor compensation for such an habitually selfish treatment. The interest of a mother in her child, which might have interposed to check her downward career, was altogether denied to her. He was made from the first the child of the state, and of the empress alone as its head. As Catherine herself wrote to the czarina at a later period, it mattered little to her whether she were thousands of miles away from her son, as she never saw him. So she plunged into frivolous profligacy; had her secret parties and her new lovers; defied the grand duke; drove the Count Alexander Schouvaloff and his wife, who had been appointed to succeed Monsieur and Madame Tchoglodoff on the death of the former, nearly to their wits' end by the malicious witticisms and scornful epithets which she herself, and her *coterie*, under her guidance, showered on their devoted heads. The

Digitized by Google

count had a trick of blinking with one side of his face when any thing posed or annoyed him, and this Catherine mimicked to the great delight of her partisans. Léon Narichkine, himself a clever mimic, and a man of considerable powers of wit, who degraded himself to be the buffoon of the court the better to cover his designs, followed Soltikoff as Catherine's lover; and his ascendency sufficiently marks the downward tendency of her character at this period. Soltikoff, after a short time, had proved ungrateful and indifferent; the report of his boasting at foreign courts of her favour fully dispelled the illusion in his case. Narichkine proved equally faithless and insolent; but she now no longer wept over such conduct. Finding him one day impertinently stretched on a couch in her room, chanting forth a low song at the top of his voice, regardless of compromising her beyond tolerance, she ran to one of her most trusted attendants, procured some nettles, and, armed with these, they both assailed the recumbent lover, and inflicted so severe a punishment upon him, that he was unable to appear in public for some days, and ever afterwards kept his insolence more within bounds. Her next choice, Count Stanislaus Poniatovsky, was a more worthy and more lasting attachment. Him she eventually placed on the throne of Poland. But the die was cast, and henceforward the moral and intellectual qualities of Catherine appeal quite unequally to our sympathies; and though there are still glimpses of a better nature, and the provocatives to evil which she hourly received must still be taken into account in weighing her moral responsibility, we feel that we are losing sight rapidly of the injured young wife, and seeing more and more of the practised *intriguante*, the future Czarina Catherine II.

The follies and infidelities of her husband assumed a more serious aspect as time went on. He worshiped the King of Prussia, and did not conceal his sympathy with him in the war with Russia. He alienated the affection of the Russian guards by making them act in a subordinate capacity to a regiment of Holsteiners whom he had introduced and equipped. "These cursed Holsteiners," muttered the guards; and Catherine heard of and made a note of the expression for future use. She herself, on the other hand, gave an entertainment to which numbers of unprivileged Russians were admitted, to return charmed with her affability, and spreading her praises every where; carrying with them, too, little trinkets gained at her lottery, which, worthless in themselves, yet, coming from her, served as so many badges of their devotion. In her domestic circle things came to a crisis; for after the daughter of Biren, and several other court-ladies, had enjoyed in succession

Digitized by Google

the grand duke's chief favour, this settled down into something like constancy on the Countess Elizabeth Woronzow, the niece of the chancellor, Michael Woronzow, and elder sister of the Princess Daskaw, the future favourite of Catherine. The grand duchess resenting this, according to her new line of tactics, Peter talked seriously of repudiating her and marrying the countess. Both husband and wife appealed to the empress; he complaining of her unbearable temper, she imploring (she knew with safety) to be sent back to her own country, if this neglect and ill-treatment on all sides were to continue. To obtain an interview, she counterfeited illness, and secured the services of the empress's confessor. Peter relied on the Schouvaloffs and Woronzows. On the private interviews with Elizabeth concerning this family *fracas* the curtain drops, the autobiography ending abruptly in a conversation with the czarina.

The page of history records the sequel. In two years the empress was no more. In six months from that time Peter III. had ceased to reign; and a few days afterwards his assassination by Catherine's lover, Alexis Orloff, startled all Europe.

Art. III.—THE RESULTS OF SHORT IMPRISONMENTS.

Suggestions for the Repression of Crime, contained in Charges delivered to Grand Juries of Birmingham, supported by additional Facts and Arguments. By Matthew Davenport Hill. Parker and Son. 1857.

Judicial Statistics of 1857 (*England and Wales*). Eyre and Spottiswoode. 1858.

It would probably be difficult to point to a single branch of English law or polity which is based on a clear principle, fully apprehended and consistently carried out. Our national character is so eminently empiric, rather than scientific, our national understanding so much more practical than logical, that the deduction of a system of action from a theoretical truth, however well ascertained, seems almost impossible to us. Both in legislation and in administration, we not only reason, but act on the "inductive" method. Instead of evolving a principle from determined facts, and proceeding to square our conduct by it when once recognised, we generally direct our efforts to meet by special means each fact which forces itself upon our notice. It is thus that not merely our political constitution, but our whole social system, is a growth, and not a creation, both in the gross and in each individual part. If any thing appears to be

Digitized by Google

undeniably wrong,—if any institution works positive and unendurable mischief,—we proceed to amend or abolish the source of the evil, with a view simply to correct the specific defect which has compelled attention; not unfrequently with too little regard to distant consequences, or to the dependence of other parts of the fabric on that which we are obliged to remove or alter. Consequently, in many cases our system of action, if system it can be called, is a series of anomalous and inconsistent measures; each good perhaps in itself, and each certainly directed to a wise end, but none complete and self-contained, and most of them very ill-supported and very inadequately supplemented by the rest. In few of our institutions is this confusion so apparent as in our penal code, and our general dealing with offenders who come under its provisions. We have here the remnants of a system of immemorial antiquity, which had endured until advancing civilisation rendered it revolting to the habits and feelings in which society was educated; patched with shreds and fragments from the schemes of many modern reformers, each of whom looked at the situation from a distinct point of view, and recommended the adoption of remedies which, taken altogether, might have met the necessities of the case, but which were little likely to do so when disjointed from their connection, modified, and applied otherwise either in manner or extent than their adviser had intended. The idea which originally gave birth to and animated the penal system of this as of all other countries, was that of retribution,—that he who had inflicted pain or injury on others, should himself be made to suffer in like manner. This is the primitive notion of the nature and meaning of punishment. Its intention is not, in the view of a simple and unreflecting age, directed primarily to the protection of society, or in any way to the reformation of the criminal. The magistrate is influenced in its infliction, and the law in its apportionment, by the rude justice of an instinct which seeks a social revenge on those who have injured individuals or society. Very soon punishment comes to be regarded as having an object as well as a cause. It is still meted out with more or less regard to the amount of suffering which may be considered to be morally deserved by a specific offence; but an increasing tendency appears to find for it additional justification, and practically to distribute it, by a reference to the necessity of protecting society against the commission of crime; an idea in an early age better understood than expressed, but evidently felt by lawgivers in their award of the degrees of infliction attached to different breaches of the law.

From this notion, rather than from that of retributive justice, arose the terrible severity of our late penal code. English legislators could hardly have been persuaded, on the latter prin-

Digitized by Google

ciple, to punish petty thefts with death. It would have been perfectly clear to them that it was absurd to exact the same retribution for robbery as for murder. But, in order to protect society, it seemed necessary to make the most effectual provision against the most probable offences; and as, until lately, men undoubtingly measured the efficacy of law by the severity of punishment, and conceived of no other method of restraining crime than by affixing deterrent suffering to its detection, the anomaly arose that many trivial offences were more severely punished than those which indicated a far deeper degree of depravity, but which were, on that very account, far less common. So the law continued, until its cruelty became utterly abhorrent to civilised humanity; and then a series of partial reforms modified its character, until, from being the most severe, it became the most lenient in Europe. But while the details were altered, the system was retained. We returned to a code far more nearly that of retributive justice than that we destroyed; we continue to punish offences in a degree proportioned rather to their moral enormity than to any other consideration, though only a few thinkers maintain in theory the principle of retribution. And yet our penal discipline is still, for the great mass of offenders, based on the idea of determent, while nine-tenths of its deterrent effect has, by the progress of humanising legislation, been wholly done away. To this fundamental arrangement, composed of the remnants of the ancient system, have been superadded the improvements selected from the various schemes suggested by philanthropists and thinkers of late years, which have brought our prisons into their actual condition. The separate cells were necessary to prevent the gaol from being, palpably and notoriously, a school of crime. The wholesome diet, the comfortable arrangements, the enforced cleanliness, were concessions to the humanity of the age. The useful occupations introduced into some of the best-conducted prisons were suggested by men who would have made them an important engine of economy and of reformation; combined with the other elements of our present system, they are neither. In this way we have introduced portions of discordant schemes in such a manner as often to neutralise each other; and by uniting fragmentary suggestions of different minds, torn from their context, with a system approved by none of the suggesters, we have impaired, if not destroyed, the efficacy of the latter, without realising the full value of any one of the reforms we have adopted.

Of these, indeed, few, if any, are consistent with perseverance in our present system of punishment. Our code is, as has been said, based upon the principle of retribution; and not merely so, but on the principle of apportioning specific and equal pen-

Digitized by Google

alties to each case of a specific breach of the law. We punish rather the offence than the offender. The latter suffers, not because he is a burglar, but because he has burglariously entered a certain house; not because he is a notorious forger, but because he has forged the signature of a given person to a cheque for a given amount. We not merely require proof of an individual act of guilt before pronouncing him to be criminal, which is just and necessary; but we consider generally, if not always, this special act as if it stood alone and by itself, and punish him for this, and for this alone. The sentence is passed rather on the theft than on the thief; it is guided generally, in the intention of the judge as well as of the lawgiver, by a reference to some rough moral standard, according to which it is determined what degree of penal infliction is *deserved* by the solitary act of which the culprit is found guilty. This idea is so little discussed or disputed, that it is very probable that, even in the minds of those who daily act upon it, it has hardly assumed a definite shape; but the pages of our statute-book, and the records of our law-courts, bear unmistakable testimony to its paramount influence. Except that sometimes by law, and yet more often by the discretion of the judge, second and third offences—or rather second and third convictions, which mean something very different—are punished with aggravated severity, we might almost say that the penal law of England is guided merely by the idea of what amount of retributive suffering is morally deserved by each detected offence taken separately and solely into consideration.

The practical result of this system, which certainly was not expected by legislators or magistrates of old, is this:—every day the magistrates are sending hundreds of culprits to prison; every day thousands of culprits are undergoing the punishment of incarceration; every day hundreds are released, of a large proportion of whom it is certain that before that week, perhaps before that day is ended, they will again have commenced a course of conflict with the law, and may not impossibly be again undergoing punishment. In a word, the result of all our system of indulgence, discipline, retribution, is, that we pass annually through our gaols a vast number of criminals, who remain as active and as dangerous on their release as before their capture; who were criminals while they were free, and who resume a life of crime the day that they recover their freedom; on whom, moreover, the punishment which they have just endured has had no good effect whatsoever. In fact, if we are to believe the police, it is very rarely indeed that any man comes out of prison less criminal—less disposed to crime, or less likely to commit it—than before. Every day, then, we turn loose from our prisons hundreds of our internal foes, to return to a career of war upon

Digitized by Google

society. This is perfectly well known to our police, our gaolers, and our judges. It is the inevitable consequence of applying a retributive principle to solitary acts, without reference to the general evidence as to the character of the offender; and if there were no other proof of the utter inadequacy of this limitation of the principle, and of the complete failure of the system we have built upon it, this fact would be demonstration amply sufficient.

It can scarcely be necessary to enter into a detailed condemnation of a system which inevitably—it may almost be said intentionally—produces such a result. To imprison for a while, and then release, men who on their release will do exactly as they have done before, is neither justice nor mercy to them, and unjust to society. They have suffered pain or inconvenience without benefit to others: the state has been at the trouble and expense of inflicting it to no purpose whatsoever. To punish erroneously, inadequately, or, from whatever cause, ineffectually, is an error both of policy and of principle; and any system of punishment which is habitually ineffectual to restrain crime is thereby self-condemned. The fair aim, at least of all legal punishment, —whatever may be its justifying and regulative principle,—is the protection of the community against the assaults of lawless individuals; and if it be found that the latter are returned upon us, after undergoing the penalty of their offences, as lawless as ever, it is clear that our penal system is radically in fault. Nor have we any right to wonder that such should be the case with the code of punishments actually in force among us. Society demands of the law a protection against its evil-disposed members: a treatment of as yet unconfirmed criminals which shall give fair *promise* of security, and of confirmed evil-doers which shall in some way fully secure it against future misdeeds by them. There are three ways in which it is conceivably possible that this protection and security shall be afforded, viz.:

By determent—which is depriving the offender of the courage to do ill.

By incapacitation—which is depriving him of the power to do ill.

By reformation—which is depriving him of the desire to do ill.

Of all these modes the second is of course the most certain preventive; and, in the manner in which we used at one time to apply it, we at least secured ourselves against all further molestation from the worst portion of our convicted criminals. When we ceased to hang them, we transported them to the antipodes; and in those days they but rarely returned to vex the community from which they had been cut off. But it so happened that we had never had occasion to try any other method of absolute incapacitation than these two, while we had the resource of transportation to fall back upon for those whom a dawning humanity

Digitized by Google

would not allow us to deprive of life and hope; and when the recalcitration of our colonies deprived us of this most convenient expedient for getting rid of our worst criminals with some chance of reform to them, we were at a loss what to do with the dregs of our population thus flung back upon us, and were without any established form of punishment which would place them permanently beyond the power of doing us mischief. Imprisonment for life, the only effectual substitute for transportation, was almost unknown among us, and had a sound so awful to our ears that we shrank from adopting it; and thus we find ourselves now deprived of all means of permanent incapacitation of our convicts, and obliged to fall back upon such other resources as our system affords, whether deterrent or reformatory. Of the last we have little enough; the idea of rendering the prison a place of moral education being one both slow to gain ground in the public mind, and not very easy of practical execution. In some at least of the government prisons, especially those under the management of Captain Crofton, as chairman of the directors of convict prisons in Ireland, it has been carried into effect with very considerable success. A number of men sentenced to long terms of penal servitude are subjected, first, to a protracted period of *bonâ-fide* penalty in the form of separate confinement,—during which their old habits are broken, and their wild passions weakened, if not quelled, by the weary pressure of restraint and solitude,—and afterwards to various stages of probation, till their final release, when they are provided with employment, and looked after by the authorities with friendly interest, if they have shown themselves susceptible of reformation.

But these cases are those only of a portion of the convicts, sentenced to terms of punishment exceeding three or four years; and the whole number of those so sentenced is but an insignificant fraction—about one-fortieth—of the prisoners who annually pass through our gaols. The great mass of the sentences inflicted by the criminal courts of this country are for three months and less. What reformatory process can be brought to bear on prisoners confined for so short a period? There is no time for the correction of vices or the formation of habits; hardly is there a chance for the reception of the good seed which the chaplain and the schoolmaster may labour to implant. Whatever virtue can be attributed to such a punishment, even in our best-regulated prisons, must lie entirely in its deterrent force; unless, indeed, we should take into account the gain to society from the brief incapacitation of the culprit for further mischief. To deter, then, must be supposed to be the practical aim of the greater part of our penal code; since the room afforded for reformatory influences is so small and so restricted. Unfortunately the effect of the changes

Digitized by Google

prompted by the humanity of the present generation has been to weaken most seriously the deterrent effect of our prisons; and no one who compares them with the dwellings of the very poor, or their fare with that of the ordinary labourer, will believe that, when the sense of shame is once lost, the fear of a gaol will drive many men back into the paths of industrious poverty. It must be admitted, we fear, that while the existing scheme of our criminal code obliges those who administer it to rely almost entirely for any practical effects it may produce on the fear supposed to be inspired by its penalties, their deterrent power has been greatly diminished; and that the whole array of penal expedients at our command fails to protect us against the injuries they were designed to check. We do not attempt permanently to incapacitate the criminal; we have not the opportunity to reform him, and we cannot deter him. It would seem, then, that we need some prompt and vigorous amendment of our penal system, to enable us to meet with any degree of efficiency the requirements of our actual position.

Those who adhere to the principle of apportioning the measure of retribution in every case to the special crime committed, and who would shrink from inflicting more than may seem on that principle to be by each particular offence deserved, forget or ignore with whom we have to deal—against what kind of enemies society defends itself by the costly apparatus of gaols, judges, and policemen. If crime were generally an isolated fact in the history of the offender,—if we had to do only with ordinary members of the industrious community, lapsed from innocence under the pressure of strong temptation,—the task would be far easier and simpler than it is. But notoriously this is not so. The great majority of those breaches of the law which deserve the name of crimes consist of offences against property for the sake of gain—in a word, of thefts, using that term to include all cases of fraudulent appropriation of the property of another, whether by violence, by stealth, by forgery, or by any other of the numerous appliances of dishonesty. And of other serious offences, a large, if not a major, proportion are committed by those who are also thieves. We have a right, then, to look in this class of crimes for the facts which will enlighten us as to the character of the criminals who form the floating population of our prisons. We find that of those who are convicted of theft there are two distinct classes, differing from one another more widely than many among them differ from the honest community out of doors. There are the habitual offenders, whose whole life is a series of criminal acts and invasion of their neighbours' rights,—the criminals by practice, use, and profession. There are also the casual offenders, whose guilty act has been an isolated interruption

Digitized by Google

to the usually honest tenor of their lives; who, under the force of temptation, have been seduced into a single act, or a short connected series of acts, undoubtedly criminal. The distinction between these two orders is exceedingly broad and marked, and must never be for a moment overlooked in any scheme for dealing with the mass of crime which infests society. The former class are the intestine enemies of the community in which they live, and against which they wage a perpetual warfare. The second class are members of that community, having a place and position therein, who have incidentally violated their duty, but who are not therefore to be confounded with its systematic and deliberate foes.

It seems undoubtedly a reproach to our civilisation, that there should exist among us a class organised, notorious, we might almost say recognised, who live in crime, and live by crime. But the fact is no more doubtful than the existence of any other occupation or profession, and of a body of men devoted to its pursuit. Every where there are men who are habitually dishonest; men who, with more or less diligence, follow some industrial employment, but who also practise more or less constantly the art of depredation, and are thieves by habit and repute, generally known to the police as bad characters, and not unfrequently suffering a short punishment on being detected in some petty offence. In all large towns this class of depredators are numerous and active; seldom venturing on crimes of great magnitude and great profit, but also of great peril; preferring the smaller gains of an easier, less dangerous, and less enterprising career. As petty pilferers, they are the source of great loss to the community; while the smallness of each individual theft generally secures them against heavy punishment. Besides these there is another class who live entirely, or almost entirely, by theft, whether as receivers of stolen goods and keepers of "flash" houses, or as professional criminals of the higher class,—accomplished pickpockets, burglars, coiners, and swindlers. These are utterly and entirely distinct from the rest of the community; whereas the pilferers before described are mingled with the lowest section of the working classes, live among them, and might be generally confounded with them. The professional thieves have quarters of their own, their own organisation, habits, and arrangements; their own haunts, where honesty seldom intrudes; they are known to one another and to the police as notorious criminals, just as John Smith is known to be a tailor, and William Brown to be a bricklayer. They lead a life of their own choice, widely different from that of any other part of the community. They dwell for the most part in untidy, unclean, comfortless, squalid lodging-houses, squandering in the roughest sensual indulgences earnings greater by far than would suffice an

Digitized by Google

honest artisan to keep his family in cleanliness and comfort; so far below the honest poor in refinement of taste and ideas, that the miserable squalor of their abodes never seems to be felt as an annoyance or a deprivation. To eat and drink abundantly, though the fare be of the coarsest, and the table and the room such as would make the daintiest food unpalatable to a fastidious man,—to live without labour and without restraint,—this seems to be their sole care and their only desire. Idleness and sensuality are their actuating motives and their distinguishing characteristics.

These two classes constitute what we may call the criminal population. By these are perpetrated at least nine-tenths of the crimes which disturb and injure the peaceable members of society. They do not, it is true, form a majority of those committed to prison for theft; but it must be remembered that the number of detections by no means represents the number of crimes committed. The casual offenders, perhaps, are caught in their first offence; the habitual criminal will, we believe, commit forty or fifty at least with absolute impunity for every one in which he is discovered. Every case, then, in which the latter is brought to justice represents an average of perhaps forty distinct crimes; every punishment of a casual offender two or three at the most. It may be easily understood how trifling comparatively would be the injury suffered by society from crime of every kind if *the criminal class* could ever be practically annihilated. Again, it is by this class that those outrages are committed which render crime a terror and a nuisance to those who are not immediately injured. The burglar, who throws a neighbourhood into alarm; the garotter, whose exploits strike consternation into the belated pedestrian,—always belong to the body of criminals by profession. These men are, be it noted, in general perfectly well known to the police. They can be visited in their dwellings or pointed out in the street. There is no mistake about their character and their occupation, any more than about that of our next-door neighbour the surgeon, or the gentleman over the way, whose brass door-plate announces him a solicitor. These, and not the class of offenders who may be guilty on one solitary occasion of purloining a stray sovereign, or abstracting a five-pound note from an employer's till, are the enemies against whom our penal system should be framed to defend us. But, in fact, we find its provisions intended, as it would appear, almost solely for the latter. If a lad snatches a tempting plaything from a shop-door, a fortnight's imprisonment may be salutary as punishment and warning. If a servant-girl appropriates her mistress's dresses, or her master's studs, it may be sufficient to punish her and let her go, trusting that she will not repeat the offence. But for the professional pickpocket or shop-

Digitized by Google

lifter, what can be more unreasonable than such treatment? To him it is merely an incident of his vocation, to which he had made up his mind on entering it, as the soldier makes up his mind to the chance of wounds or capture. It is not terrible enough, before he has endured it, to deter him from guilt; it becomes less dreadful when experience has taught him to appreciate its terrors at their value; and the fear of its repetition will not prevent his return to his usual course of life. To the lower class of habitual criminals the gaol offers few privations and many advantages. They fare worse at home, are worse fed and worse lodged. The more accomplished and successful dislike it, indeed, but not so much as they dislike the idea of honest labour and hard fare out of doors. The former, in some instances, make a practice of spending the winter months in prison. The latter take their chance of it with comparative indifference: it has no deterrent effect on them; how should it, when, whatever its hardships may be, the chance is in each individual act of crime about forty to one in favour of the culprit's escape? What severity of punishment could be effectual, if the probability of its infliction were so small? The criminal is imbued with the spirit of the gambler, believes thoroughly in his luck, and trusts on every occasion to escape altogether. On this frame of mind the fear of a possible punishment, however severe, is ineffectual. The practised offender would be deterred by the *certainty* of a fortnight's imprisonment; he will defy a small chance of incarceration for life. On him, therefore, our retributive system of punishment falls uselessly; and if we mean to check his depredations on society, we must adopt some other method and some sounder principle. The actual penalties in use fall lightly on him, and are only painful to the far less criminal and infinitely less dangerous culprit whom a casual lapse from virtue has subjected to the visitation of the law. The prisoner of "previous good character," already severely punished by its loss, feels keenly the additional punishment of imprisonment; the deliberate enemy of society regards little this unpleasant but only occasional condition of his warfare. It is clearly necessary either to devise some new system of punishment, which shall be effectual to deter or to reform the latter without being unjust to the former, or else to establish an entirely different treatment for each class of offenders. One thing seems to be admitted on all hands, by those who have experience of the working of our gaols,—that short imprisonments, as regards the habitual criminal, are worthless; and that no sentence short of a term of penal servitude sufficient to allow of such a process of reformatory discipline as that employed by Captain Crofton, is at all likely to return the prisoner to the world a better member of society than before.

Digitized by Google

It has been suggested that, as idleness appears to be the vice of disposition most characteristic of the criminal class, and most fatal to every hope of redeeming them from a life of crime, labour is at once the severest punishment and the most wholesome discipline that can be inflicted upon them. This principle seems to be dimly recognised in the practice which makes "hard labour" a part and an aggravation of judicial sentences. But, as usual, it has been only half-understood, and incompletely applied. The sentence to "hard labour" is not really, and could hardly be made, what it professes to be. To enforce upon the prisoner an amount of work so great and so fatiguing as to be in fact a severe punishment, would scarcely be possible. In the first place, the quantity to be exacted could not be fixed by law, because the different strength of individual prisoners would absolutely prevent the application of any general rule. To the governor of the prison, then, the task of regulating the amount of the penalty inflicted by the judge must be left; by which an additional element of confusion and uncertainty would be introduced into our penal code, and a discretion given to the prison authorities, which, however judiciously exercised, would be the source of endless difficulty and trouble.

A sentence to hard labour, therefore, does not in reality entail on the prisoner a penalty severe enough to be deterrent; nor, indeed, as has been already shown, is it likely that any kind of prison discipline could really be made to act with deterrent effect on the criminal class. Yet, light as it is, the labour required in the gaol is a cause of frequent punishments, from the anxiety of the prisoners to avoid it. Working as slaves, without any chance of profiting by their own exertions, they naturally work as little as they can, and endeavour by every means in their power to evade the performance of their hated task. This is especially the case with the labour of the crank and the treadmill;—labour known to be useless, and to be inflicted merely as punishment, and so turned to waste alike in an economical and in a moral sense, and benefiting neither the prisoner nor society. By the testimony of prison officers we know that the crank is dreaded and detested; evaded if possible, always worked grudgingly and reluctantly, and only under fear of punishment: and thus not only fails to exercise any influence for good by the formation of industrious habits, but actually, so far as it has any moral effect whatsoever, tends to render the idea of work more and more hateful by painful and degrading associations. And the lighter occupations in use, such as mat-making and assistance in the necessary work of the prison, though at once less penal and less mischievous, fail to produce any tendency to industry in the prisoner for a very simple and natural reason,—he has nothing to

Digitized by Google

gain from them. He does not receive the smallest benefit from his labours while in prison; and therefore, though, in default of all other employment for his time, he will sometimes expend some energy on his work in the gaol, yet on his release he has no associations of profit or enjoyment therewith, and no increased inclination towards a life of honest industry. The experiment of the disciplinary effects of labour has never yet been fairly tried on our prisoners, simply because labour has never been made a source of benefit or profit of any kind to them. We cannot so apply it as to render it a deterrent penalty; we have refused so to apply it as to make it a salutary discipline.

That at present little or no good has been done by prison-tasks is therefore no proof that much might not be achieved under a better system. Those who recommend labour as a means of curative punishment, suppose its conditions to be such as shall conform to the requirements of reason and of human nature. There are very few men who have so strong a love of industry in the abstract as to labour heartily at that in which they have no interest, either direct or indirect. Least of all must we expect such laboriousness from the class most idle of all, and therefore requiring the strongest stimulus of direct personal interest. The criminal needs stronger inducements to labour than the honest man, because he is, by nature or by habit, infinitely more strongly disposed to idleness. To do him good, his work must be willing and diligent; to be willing and diligent, its beneficial effect on his own condition must be most clearly and keenly felt. In no way can his interest in it be made so forcibly to impress itself on his mind as by rendering his release from durance consequent on his industry; by allowing, and indeed compelling, him *to work his way out of prison*. The suggestion, then, of those who believe strongly in the reformatory effect of labour is this: that labour, and not time, should henceforward be the measure of a prisoner's sentence; that, instead of being condemned to a certain term of imprisonment, which his idleness will not lengthen and which his industry cannot abridge, he should be doomed to pay, over and above the cost of his maintenance in prison, a fixed sum by way of fine,—such sum to be earned by working at some industrial occupation in prison, and in no other way.

This plan may seem to threaten a startling innovation; but it clearly offers great advantages as compared with the existing system. It would certainly not be less deterrent than the latter; for the criminal would have no hope of avoiding the performance of his task while in prison, and, in addition to the punishment of incarceration, would have before him the certain necessity of really hard work as the only means of recovering his liberty. It would connect in his mind idleness with confinement, and indus-

Digitized by Google

try with freedom; and would thus be more likely to incline him to industry on his release than any other mode of punishment. It would give him an opportunity of learning a trade, and a better chance of finding work when liberated than he now enjoys. It would afford a better proof of his capability of reformation than perhaps any other test. It would perhaps create in him a desire to return to an honest life, would certainly facilitate his restoration and test its practicability. And it would secure the incorrigible idler a punishment much more severe than he now undergoes, and would thus be most dreaded by the idlest class of prisoners—the professional thieves. These are, under the present system, made to suffer less by imprisonment than those who have yielded to incidental temptation; under the plan proposed, they would certainly suffer more. The working man would set himself heartily to work to effect his own redemption, and feel the infliction less than he now feels the fixed term of confinement; the habitual idler would curse the introduction of a change which left him to choose between earnest work and prolonged imprisonment. The necessity for artificial prison-punishments would be very considerably diminished, and a serious impediment to the reformatory effect of prison-discipline would thus be removed. The gain to the country, moreover, would be great, even in a purely economical point of view. The state would gain, even on our present system of short detentions, the constant labour of, speaking roughly, about twenty-five thousand persons,* whom it is now obliged to support in idleness; a large proportion of whom would be able-bodied men, well qualified to render good service under proper discipline, and with the stimulus of self-interest to excite their energy to the utmost.

Here, however, arises an objection which must not be overlooked, lest it should be supposed altogether forgotten. It is said that the labour of prisoners interferes with the industry of honest men out of prison. To this the obvious answer is by an immediate *reductio ad absurdum*. If it is better for the public that the prisoner should be idle in gaol, it must be equally so that the criminal should be idle out of doors; for in either case he interferes equally with those at present in honest employment. But if this be so, since the man must either work or steal, it follows that the existence of an idle and criminal class is a benefit to the community; which proposition few will be found to maintain. It is ridiculous to imagine that the idleness of any number of men can ever be more profitable to society than their labour, and it is only necessary to explain the objection in order to refute it. One which sounds at first more plausible is suggested by men who have had actual experience of the working of the existing

* This is about the average number of prisoners confined *at any one time* in the convict and county prisons of England and Wales.

Digitized by Google

system, and who object, that hardly ever does a prisoner earn enough to pay the expenses of his own detention and maintenance. Granted,—under the present system, when he has no interest in his own labour, and is only employed at such ill-paid work as mat-making, or competes with machinery as a handloom weaver. Morally and mechanically he is placed at the greatest possible disadvantage. But give him the same inducement to work that the free labourer enjoys, in the knowledge that he works *for himself;* give him employment of a reasonable kind, and not one like handloom weaving, by which it is barely possible to live out of doors; and are we really to believe that he cannot do work to the value of 24*l.* annually, the amount of expense incurred by the state on account of each prisoner in the ordinary gaols? that he cannot, in due time, earn enough in addition to this to pay such amount of fine as, when the conditions of his labour have been taken into account, shall be imposed upon him? Certainly we have no right to draw any such conclusion from the present unsatisfactory results of prison industry, under a system which renders industry almost impossible, and approximates the work of the prisoner as nearly as possible to that of the slave. Some, no doubt, will reply, that the convicted criminal should be treated not as a free man, but as a slave. True; but being a slave whom we do not desire to retain in permanence, he should be allowed to earn his own release from slavery; and a slave, with that prospect before him, works under inducements at least as strong as those of the freeman. By placing the criminal in this position, we show him no weak indulgence, no mistaken lenity; we can punish him as severely as we please, at the same time that we never condemn him to the most terrible and demoralising condition in which man can place his fellow-man—that of being without hope of self-redemption. And we should avoid in great measure the reproach, that we make the criminal in prison better off than the honest man at liberty: for whatever comforts he enjoyed would be earned by the one as much as by the other; while the prisoner must, in addition, pay out of his earnings the cost of the officers who are set over him, of the precautions which secure him,—the cost, in fact, of his punishment,—as well as the pecuniary mulct imposed by the state.

It would be necessary, probably, for the success of this or of any other scheme of prison-discipline, that sentences should be longer on the average than those at present in use. On the plan just described, the amount of fine exacted should be such as to require a period of confinement generally not less than six months; the great majority of sentences at present being for periods of three months, one month, or even less. Except for the class of casual offenders, such a term is absurdly short; and

Digitized by Google

even for them it would not perhaps be too severe a penalty that any offence implying dishonesty should be visited by imprisonment for not less than six months. A shorter period of confinement suffices neither for deterrent nor for any other purposes. There is no time for new influences to be brought to bear, or for new habits to be formed; there is not even time for the full perception of that intolerable irksomeness which is the only thing really penal retained by our system of punishment. The sentimental tenderness which has been of late years displayed towards the least deserving class of our countrymen, has produced results seriously detrimental to the effect of our penal code. We have shrunk with so much morbid and discreditable weakness from the infliction of severe suffering, that, except in cases where the feelings of society are grossly outraged, it has become the practice to inflict no punishment worthy of the name, or at all commensurate with the character of the evil with which, somehow or other, we have to grapple—the repression of which is the first condition of peace and social order. Unless this folly be treated with the stern disregard which it deserves, it is simply impossible to do thoroughly what has to be done by any method which can be devised; for all such methods must involve a longer period of detention than that at present in use. But now that our criminals are of necessity let loose among ourselves, we are forced to think of them in a simpler and sterner light than that in which they are viewed as objects of pure compassion. We have been warned by more than one series of violent and daring outrages what is the true character of the social pest with which we have so long dallied; and we may hope that the fashion of mawkish tenderness is becoming somewhat less popular as the savage nature of its *protégés* is more frequently manifested. It needs but a few more striking atrocities, committed by released convicts, to reduce it to silence and impotence; and to render possible the infliction of such severity as may be requisite, especially when combined with the just as well as merciful element of hope given in the power of self-redemption. At least it should be remembered that the fittest objects for our regard and tenderness are the innocent, and not the guilty; and that we have no right to impair the efficacy of the protection we owe the former by any weak indulgence to their enemies. In a war like that which the criminal class are waging against society, it is our duty to provide effectually for the security of our friends before we think of sparing our foes.

Especially unjust is it to deal in a spirit of mistaken lenity with that section of the subjects of punishment upon whom previous inflictions have failed of effect. Under the system which

Digitized by Google

we have briefly sketched in outline, we believe that this class would not, as at present, include the great mass of our prisoners.* But under any system there will be many incorrigibles—men who are neither to be trained in industry nor frightened out of crime. What is to be done with these? Captain Crofton, after careful study and long experience, believes that 75 or 80 per cent of our criminals may be permanently reformed; that the remaining 25 or 20 per cent are as yet beyond the moral treatment of man. It is indispensable that we should cease to turn them loose again and again, to resume a career of depredation. We cannot deter them; we have failed to reform them; it remains to incapacitate them, to punish them in such a manner that they shall be effectually precluded from further mischief. Formerly they were hanged; afterwards they were transported, and never, or very seldom, returned,—at all events, they very rarely appeared among us; it is only of late years that we have come to the practice of letting them loose upon society, after three, five, sometimes ten convictions,—after it had been proved again and again that to release them was only to turn the wolf into the sheepfold. We must return to the old object, though we cannot attain it by the same means. When we have brought our system of minor punishments to that state in which it shall be, as far as possible, effectual in preventing relapse into crime, we must provide security for the final incapacitation of those who do and will relapse. We may, we assuredly ought to, give them more than one chance—more than two chances; but when it has at last become clear that they are, and mean to remain, members of the criminal class, we must take means not merely to interrupt, but finally to close their career.

We believe that after a second conviction has proved the act of crime which first subjected the prisoner to legal correction to have been no isolated incident in his life, but one of a series more or less continuous, we may fairly assume that he is a member of that class which lives, wholly or partially, by the plunder of others. Those who have had experience in dealing with criminals pronounce that in this assumption we should be in no danger of doing injustice; but should even allow many to rank as casual offenders whose life has been notoriously and habitually criminal. The professional thief is generally an itinerant. He knows his business too well to practise his trade in the town where he habitually resides. Periodically he disappears thence; he makes a circuit among the most promising localities for fifty or a hundred

* About 54 per cent of the criminals proceeded against by indictment for grave crimes are *ascertained* to be of the criminal class. About 28 per cent of the much larger class of criminals convicted summarily are ascertained to be of the same class.

Digitized by Google

miles around; and he returns to spend his booty under the eyes of the police, who know how he acquired it, but cannot interfere with him. Having seldom the ill-fortune to be taken twice in the same place, he very often escapes with the penalty awarded to a first offence even after many convictions. It is certain, that in making a second conviction the test of habitual criminality we should allow many criminals to escape; it is unlikely that we should very often be led into injustice towards a casual offender. It may therefore be justly considered that persons convicted a second time should be treated very differently from others; that they should be regarded as dangerous characters, whose liberty is, in their present condition, a menace to the community, and who are not merely to be punished as guilty of a specific offence, but as belonging to the class of offenders who have forfeited all claim to lenity, and may be justly treated with the severity which a criminal habit of life deserves, and which the great legal purpose of protecting society from their inroads calls for.

Mr. Hill, the excellent and philanthropic Recorder of Birmingham, has published a suggestion for the treatment of habitual criminals, which he proposed to apply to all who had ever been found guilty of crime; but which, even if we could accept it in its present shape, we should certainly restrict to the twice-convicted offender, considering that without such restriction its working would prove frequently unjust, and might drive the man who has once fallen from innocence into a life of guilt. In his judicial experience, the absurdity of punishing the professional thief for the isolated acts of theft in which he is detected, and then releasing him to be no less a thief than before, has been naturally forced on Mr. Hill's attention. His suggestion amounts to this, that such a man should be punished directly and avowedly as one living in habitual crime; a proposal of so much importance, that we quote in full his explanation and defence of it:

"I propose that every person who has been convicted of a felony, or of a misdemeanor implying fraud (as obtaining goods under false pretences, knowingly passing base coin, and the like), shall be liable to be dealt with as follows: If after the expiration of his imprisonment under that conviction he shall be brought before a magistrate charged with persevering in crime, it shall be the duty of the magistrate, if the witnesses by evidence of general conduct satisfy his mind that the charge is established, to call upon the prisoner to show that he enjoys the means of honest subsistence, either from his property, his labour, the kindness of his friends, the bounty of the charitable, or from his parish. Should he succeed in adducing this proof, he is to be discharged. Should no such proof be forthcoming, he is to be called upon to give bail for his good behaviour. Supposing him to answer this demand, he is to be still entitled to his discharge. But in case of his failure, he is to be

Digitized by Google

held to bail on his own recognisances, and his case to be sent to a jury at the Assizes or Sessions; when, if a verdict pass against him, he is to be sentenced to imprisonment for a term fixed by the law, but capable of diminution by the judge before whom he is tried.

Suppose him, then, on his trial, and observe how he is fenced about with protections; 'covered,' as Erskine expresses it, from head to foot with the panoply of the law. In the first place, his accusers must satisfy the jury that he was at the time of his apprehension in the course of life which they charge upon him; not merely that he was so before his conviction. This evidence he will rebut if he can by impeaching the character of the witnesses, showing that their statements are false or inconclusive, or by explaining away the facts established against him. And in this part of his case, as in all other parts, he may adduce witnesses of his own. But suppose him to fail in meeting the charge. He then falls back on his second defence, and shows the manner in which he subsists. Now if he have in truth an honest income, it is difficult even to imagine a set of circumstances which will disable him from proving a fact so emphatically within his own knowledge. But we will go on to suppose him defeated in this second defence. Even then, unless he is altogether bereft of honest friends, having confidence that he will not commit crime, he finds bail and remains at liberty. The species of objection to which I thought my proposal most obnoxious is, that it offers too many chances of escape to be practically efficient for the restraint of criminals. On this head, however, none who are conversant with the life and habits of the class in question have the least misgiving, nor has that objection been much pressed in any quarter. On the contrary, the numerous attacks which the plan has undergone have been always directed against the danger of committing injustice towards the convict. That such a miscarriage is within the limits of possibility, I must admit; but that such trials as I propose are more open to this reproach than trials of specific offences, or so open, I do take upon myself, speaking from a very long experience in criminal courts, confidently to deny.'

We cannot, however, acquiesce in this proposal of Mr. Hill's for dealing with the criminal too perseverant in crime to be checked by the punishments which are or may be in use for ordinary offenders; for we cannot but think it open,—even when limited, as we have suggested, to the case of a second conviction,—to the charge of harassing with an undefined danger, even if not endangering, the liberty of the innocent, or of those who are struggling towards innocence. A law based on the same principle exists, it is true, in Bengal; and where not interfered with by the prejudices of English-bred lawyers, is said to work well and effectively. It is admitted that the police—and others besides the police—know the persons of the thieves and other criminals whose profession is crime, and could, if necessary, collect the whole body of them in one court, and give

Digitized by Google

proof of the character and mode of life of each. Still, no Englishman would be willing to subject those whose sentences have once really expired, and who may be truly desirous of amendment, to the undefined dread of legal proceedings resting on the arbitrary judgment of the police. Moreover it is open to the grave objection, that it would be very difficult to get a jury to convict on a charge of this kind. The popular mind is not educated to a knowledge of the character, habits, and position of the criminal class. Common jurors would hardly understand the nature of the life with which the culprit at the bar was charged—would hardly understand that he was, in fact, accused of living by picking the pockets of their wives, garotting their sons and brothers, breaking into the houses of their neighbours; but they would feel, strongly and instinctively, that he was accused of a crime new to the English law, proved by merely presumptive evidence, in a manner not quite in accordance with our traditional notions of legal proof; and they would be but too apt to favour the escape of a prisoner not charged with any individual act of guilt which would forcibly strike their comprehension and turn their sympathies against him. And we have no sufficient confidence in our police as a class to feel in any way certain that they would be wrong. Nevertheless, so far as Mr. Hill's view merely embodies the sound and valuable principle that habitual perseverance in crime should be treated as a specific offence—the worst of offences—against society, it is worthy of all attention; and we feel sure that full effect might be given to the principle without in any way laying English criminal law open to the accusation of loading the remainder of every criminal's life, even after his discharge, with the fear of quite undefined and unlimited annoyances, from the espionage of the police and the vague statements of his neighbours.

Another recommendation, which is undeniably just, is, that, as at present is the case in Ireland, a considerably longer sentence should be imposed on the *habitual* criminal than need, in the general way, be passed in prison; so that a considerable term of surveillance by the police after the prison-doors were opened would be part of the specific punishment, and good behaviour would be needful to prevent a recall of this term of permissive liberty. To this we may add, that absolute imprisonment for life should be the sentence of the most incorrigible; not of the twice convicted, but of those thrice or yet oftener convicted of serious crimes. Penal restraint should be the normal condition, instead of the temporary or occasional punishment, of this last class of offenders. They have no claim to liberty which has not been long ago forfeited by their incessant invasion of the rights of others. To incapacitate them finally by

Digitized by Google

permanent incarceration is due to the community at large; and it can hardly be considered cruel towards themselves. If they persist in crime whenever they have the opportunity of doing so, it is clearly necessary that they should be for ever deprived of such opportunity. It is proposed, therefore, that imprisonment for life—which would mean in reality imprisonment during the pleasure of the Crown—should be the lot of this class of utterly hopeless offenders.

Means should be taken, by special provision for the purpose, to secure such a registration of convictions as exists in France; so that the criminal who has been punished at Birmingham in one year should not in the next be treated as a novice in guilt at York or Lancaster. Police-officers should be appointed for the special purpose of tracking these offenders from one tribunal to another, and making each judge before whom they are brought, each jury which has to try them, acquainted with their previous history. Having thus ensured a thorough knowledge of the character of the culprit, his sentence should be determined accordingly. If he has been once punished without effect, his second punishment should be proportionately severe; he may reasonably be set down as of the criminal class, and doomed accordingly to a long term of confinement, which should bring into play all the resources of reformatory experience, and leave time for a trial of the results during a considerable period of permissive freedom. A further crime would then fairly entitle him to be regarded, not merely as belonging to the criminal class, but to the class of *incorrigible* criminals. The sentence would take the form of imprisonment for life. But the prerogative which enables the Crown to accord at any moment a free or conditional pardon, would prevent such a sentence from conveying the meaning of absolutely hopeless and irretrievable confinement. Whenever, under a system of discipline adapted to the character of such prisoners, it had become clear to the prison authorities that any one of their charges was really fit for liberty, and had the means and opportunity of living honestly when at large, it would be competent to them to recommend his release; and such a recommendation would never be unnecessarily rejected. We should not deprive the most guilty of hope; but we should secure ourselves almost as effectually as in former days against that class of incorrigible offenders whose career used to terminate on the gallows. Those who should show themselves fit for liberty, would not fail to regain it; those who could not safely, and therefore should not under any circumstances, be restored to society, would be incapacitated from further mischief. Nor need their confinement be either expensive to the country or painful to themselves. By employing

Digitized by Google

them on public works of undoubted utility, and permitting them to improve their condition—subject only to the requirements of their safe custody—by means of their industry, we should at once gain for the state a supply of cheap and constant labour, and for society security against an intolerable nuisance: we should have converted dangerous enemies into useful servants.

Such a scheme as this—any method, in short, of dealing with incurables—would be greatly recommended to public opinion, and greatly facilitated in action, by the adoption of a system of punishments in the first instance which should give us fewer incurables to deal with. While we persist in a method of treatment which tends only to familiarise with punishment and to harden against shame the novice in guilt, it seems hard to visit with severe penalties the natural consequences of our own error when he has become a desperate and persevering criminal. A better system of discipline in the case of those convicted for the first time would obviate this objection, while it would probably diminish to a very considerable extent the number of second and third convictions. We do not venture to pronounce with absolute confidence in favour of any of the suggestions we have recounted. Only of two points do we feel absolutely certain: first, that our present system of short and frequent imprisonments is unsound in principle and unwise in practice; and secondly, that in all plans suggested for its amendment, the essential conditions of success are—provision for the enforcement of industrial training in the first instance, and for the permanent detention of absolutely incorrigible offenders when means of correction have been employed in vain.

Art. IV.—VIRGIL AND HIS MODERN CRITICS.

P. Vergilii Maronis Opera,—The Works of Virgil,—with a Commentary by John Conington, M.A., Professor of Latin in the University of Oxford. London: Whitaker.

Had that celebrated Chinese sage, who visited this metropolis a hundred years ago in his capacity of Citizen of the World, arrived among us a century later, there is one subject that we think would have attracted his attention, of which he then took little notice. We have often, indeed, thought it odd that the condition of our two elder Universities at a time when Gibbon was an inmate of Magdalen should have elicited not a single satirical allusion from that sly and humorous observer. But it is not

Digitized by Google

possible that such a philosopher could at the present day neglect those signs of activity which pervade every department of education. Could poor Goldsmith return to life, how easily we can picture to ourselves the honest enthusiasm with which he would hail this new "revival of letters," as well as the good-humoured gravity with which he would sometimes raise a smile at the anomalies by which it is accompanied: anomalies which are perhaps inevitable at the present stage of our progress, and not, therefore, deserving of serious censure so much as of friendly and generous criticism. But if there is one of these which more than another would have tickled that lively sense of the incongruous for which our philosopher was remarkable, it is, we think, one connected with the subject we are about to discuss. How is it, we think we hear him asking, that an author who still continues to be a text-book in our schools, and whose graces are still thought best adapted for the formation of an elegant taste, is now set up as a butt for all critics to shoot at? And how shall we account for the still more astonishing fact, that the very same men are encouraging these two opposite views at the same time, and are engaged during one half of their time in teaching their pupils to admire what they are engaged during the other half in proving unworthy of admiration? We cannot help fancying that the solution of this problem would have caused Lien Chi no ordinary amount of perplexity. And, albeit we have put the inconsistency in perhaps a somewhat exaggerated shape, yet we own to thinking it of sufficient consequence to justify some curiosity. Accordingly, as we have been long convinced that, owing to the over-anxiety of our best school of critics to confirm and perpetuate principles which in themselves are worthy of all recognition, the author of the Georgics and the Æneid stood in great danger of undue depreciation, we take the opportunity afforded by Mr. Conington's edition to invite our readers' attention to the subject. For it is not, in our opinion, a matter of small importance, to determine whether it is the position of Virgil in our schools and colleges, or the theories enunciated by his latest critics, that demand reconsideration.

It may perhaps be thought that we have overrated the influence of this particular author in our system of classical education. That is a question of experience; and our own experience is in favour of our own assertion. But be this as it may, there are quite sufficient literary reasons for discussing this question, if the more practical reason fails us; and we fancy that most of our classical readers will feel more or less beholden to us if we can supply them with any good grounds for hesitation ere they consent to look upon their old favourite as a concocter of sham goods and a corrupter of great traditions. For

Digitized by Google

really, if we believe all that Mr. Conington and Mr. Gladstone have written of him, that is what we positively must do. We think it quite possible that Mr. Conington himself did not see all the necessary consequences of his own criticism. Such cases are far from uncommon. But whether he did or did not, we must of course recognise in the opinions of so distinguished a scholar, and so candid and temperate a writer, an authority that may not be lightly set aside. And we beg, therefore, to assure him that, while objecting to the tone of his recent commentary, we do not for a moment forget the respect due to his position, or the claims which he justly has upon our confidence in all questions of classical literature.

Of the three kinds of poetry of which Virgil has left us specimens—the pastoral, the didactic, and the epic—we know not if the first would have redounded any more to his credit had it been an original instead of a translation. It is a remarkable fact, that the world has only one pastoral poet. Of those that have perished we can take no account; but certainly the circumstance that in that species of poetry which appeals to the widest class of readers, and demands the fewest extraneous accomplishments in the poet, only one author has succeeded in writing any thing which mankind cares to read, has hardly been allowed sufficient weight. Of course we are using this word 'pastoral' in its strictly formal sense; because, if we once admit "the poetry of external nature," as Mr. Conington seems half inclined to do, into this species, we shall be doing a manifest injustice, not only to Virgil and Pope, but also to Theocritus himself. How far, then, the art of composing metrical dialogues between shepherds and milkmaids on the subject of their ordinary occupations is valuable for its own sake, is, we think, extremely doubtful. There is nothing peculiarly poetical either in milking a cow or in shearing a sheep. No doubt the emotions of people so occupied are as capable of poetic illustration as those of their betters; but then it must be done by themselves.

> "Come, all you jolly shepherds
> That whistle through the glen,
> I'll tell ye of a secret
> That courtiers dinna ken.
> What is the greatest bliss
> That the tongue o' man can name?
> 'Tis to woo a bonnie lassie
> When the kye come hame."

This is capital: but a gentleman could not have written this song. Mr. Tennyson perhaps may be alluded to in Mr. Conington's eulogy of modern English idyllists; but in such of his poems as partake of that character his personages are idealised. The

Digitized by Google

gardener's daughter and the miller's daughter might just as well have been clergymen's daughters. The "Ratcatcher's Daughter" is more like the old pastoral than they are. And here Mr. Tennyson was acting exactly in the spirit of Pope's own precepts, quoted sarcastically by Mr. Conington. A genuine poet of the people, be he what he may, is doubtless well worth listening to. But such an idea, we need hardly state, was not at the bottom of the ancient idyl. That sprang, in fact, from the radically false notion that the poor were happier than the rich; that the lives of shepherds and fishermen were more happy and innocent than those of the dwellers in cities. And the pastoral proper has been vitiated by this falsehood from Theocritus down to Ambrose Philips. When the peasant himself makes this blunder, it does not offend our taste, because we know it is natural for him to believe that in certain circumstances of life he has the advantage of the "courtier;" but when the scholar says the same thing, we know it to be affectation, and are disgusted accordingly. Theocritus had this advantage, that when he described manners, he probably wrote what he saw; and when he described feelings, he possibly believed what he wrote. But the essential untruthfulness remains; and although the superiority we have mentioned, coupled with the fact of his having been the first in the field, as far at least as we are concerned, have been enough to preserve his poems from neglect, we do not believe they have been enough to render them really delightful to any very large class of readers. Our view of Virgil, then, as a pastoral poet would be something of this kind: That his own exquisite taste prevented him from making any original efforts at a style of composition of which he perceived the inherent weakness; but seeing also the convenience of this species of writing as a channel for the payment of compliments, he borrowed it wholesale from his predecessor, and cared so little to make it appear like his own, that even the incongruous Sicilian scenery was left in the picture. This last-mentioned circumstance, for which Virgil has been so much blamed, is to us of the highest significance. Virgil's taste at least is undisputed; his powers of description are universally acknowledged. Surely it would have been as easy for him to paint in Italian scenery as Sicilian. Surely, too, he could not have expected that the discrepancy would escape the notice of his contemporaries. If, therefore, he had ever meant the Eclogues as a work on which his poetical reputation should even partially rest, is it probable, is it possible, that he would have left them in their present state? At least seven out of the ten Eclogues, and perhaps more, are complimentary or political effusions, just as Pope's and Spenser's are; and Virgil might have appropriated the "setting" which he found ready to his

Digitized by Google

hand in Theocritus without any consciousness of wrong, or any indignity to poetry, since poetry was not at stake. With due deference to the great authorities against us, we think this at least as likely an account of the Eclogues as that which represents the author of the fourth and twelfth Æneid, and the bosom friend of the best men in Rome, as not merely an unscrupulous, but also an unskilful plagiarist.

Passing on to the Georgics, we have first of all two questions to consider, viz. the intention with which they were commenced, and the degree of originality displayed in the execution. But these two questions are of very different degrees of importance. If Virgil copied his precepts, and even his mode of arrangement, from previous writers, it is only saying that he adopted what he found he could not improve; and that too, as in the Eclogues, without any attempt at concealment: his allusions to Hesiod being perfectly frank and plain. So far, then, it is only a question of the progress of agricultural knowledge. But if, in undertaking this poem, he had no object in view but to construct a popular work, and merely used agriculture and rural occupations as a means to an end, not only do his obligations to Hesiod and Aratus at once assume another hue, but the sincerity and simplicity of his whole character become affected to a serious extent, and the pleasure we derive from a perusal of his moral poetry is materially diminished, if not entirely destroyed. As, therefore, the light in which we are to regard his appropriation of materials already in existence will depend a good deal upon the motive with which the work was composed, the answer to our second question will be contained in the answer to our first, which, accordingly, we will now proceed to discuss as briefly as the subject admits of.

There are, generally, two theories of the origin and purpose of the Georgics, which are quite capable of being held either together or separately. One is that with which our readers are probably most familiar, and which is thus described by Conington:

"Now that Virgil has ceased to be regarded as the rival of Homer, it is common to represent him as the poet of rural life, who is to be estimated, not by the ambitious task which imperial vanity thrust upon his manhood, but by the more simple and genial works to which he turned of himself in the freshness of youth. Such is the view which is enforced by Mr. Keble in his Lectures on Poetry.* That which especially distinguishes Virgil, it is eloquently maintained, is his ardent and irrepressible love of the country. Not only is it the animating soul of the Eclogues and Georgics, but it haunts him throughout the Æneid, venting itself in a number of half-melancholy retrospects, and breaking

* Prælectiones Academicæ, tom. ii, præll. xxxvi. xxxvii.

Digitized by Google

out into 'a thousand similes.' He seems scarcely to wish to make his hero interesting; but he is never tired of illustrating epic situations by the characteristic beauties and delicate proprieties of natural objects. Nay, it is even suggested that the event in his personal history which most markedly connects him with the country, is likely to have had a large share in determining the character of his poetry. Anxiety about the safety of his farm was one of the presiding feelings in the composition of the Eclogues; the tender recollection of the past danger, and of the scenes which he may have afterwards revisited, hovers over the Georgics; gratitude for the protection extended to him induced him to make a sacrifice of his truer instincts, and undertake the Æneid."

The other is substantially the same as that held by Mr. Merivale, namely that the Georgics had a politico-social object, and were undertaken at the recommendation of government, to redirect men's minds into a peaceful channel, and rescue the pursuit of agriculture from the discredit into which it had fallen.

Either of these two reasons is a sufficient justification of Virgil. If he wrote merely to gratify his own tastes, who shall say him nay? If, keenly alive to the poetry of rural life, he chose to weave its choicest flowers into a garland for his own temples, and to mingle at random the results of his own observation with whatever pleased him most in the works of kindred writers, this was a legitimate and genuine exercise of the poetic faculty. If, moreover, with this genial and gentle temperament he united, as it seems clear that he did, something of a deeper philosophic spirit, is that any reason why the simpler enthusiasm should have been simulated? Professor Conington, however, as far as we can arrive at his meaning, seems to differ from Mr. Keble's theory on three grounds: first, that Virgil has himself told us that epic poetry was more to his taste than bucolic or agricultural; secondly, that he has elsewhere given the same preference to natural philosophy; and thirdly, that the general character of his poetry is inconsistent with a genuine admiration of external nature. Now no doubt the passage upon which Mr. Conington relies for the support of the first of these assertions will bear that interpretation:

> "Prima Syracosio dignata est ludere versu,
> Nostra nec erubuit silvas habitare Thalia.
> Cum canerem reges et prœlia, Cynthius aurem
> Vellit, et admonuit: Pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
> Pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen."

"Cynthius" here *may* certainly mean his patron Mæcenas, who drew him away from the subject in which he naturally delighted to work for a special object. The rest of the passage, the "non inussa cano," is consistent with such a supposition, and seems, we confess, couched in a half-regretful tone:

Digitized by Google

> " . . . Namque super tibi erunt, qui dicere laudes,
> Vare, tuas cupiant et tristia condere bella—
> Agrestem tenui meditabor arundine Musam.
> Non iniussa cano. Si quis tamen hæc quoque, si quis
> Captus amore leget," &c.

And we may add, too, that the aspiration expressed towards the close of the fourth eclogue may be taken as indication of a taste for that kind of writing:

> " O mihi tam longæ maneat pars ultima vitæ,
> Spiritus et, quantum sat erit tua dicere facta!"

But then, if we adopt this interpretation, what, in the first place, becomes of Mr. Conington's own note upon the sixth eclogue, to the effect that Cynthius is really Apollo, *i. e.* the poet's own genius, recalling him to a sense of his peculiar gifts? And what, in the second place, becomes of the assertion that the Georgics were not written with any serious purpose? For the object of our present article, it is no matter which interpretation we adopt; for either would exonerate Virgil from the charge of making poetical capital out of the rural sympathies of his countrymen. If we take the admonition of Cynthius to mean the promptings of the poet's own genius, we have at once a strong confirmation of Mr. Keble's theory. If we suppose it to mean the commands of an actual fleshly patron, we have an equally strong testimony in favour of that other hypothesis which, for the sake of brevity, we have described as Mr. Merivale's. What we take from the one we add to the other; and accordingly we are quite willing for the present to leave the question undetermined.

The two next reasons advanced by Mr. Conington appeal very much to the peculiar temperament of the individual reader. We have already alluded to one of them, in asking whether there is any thing necessarily contradictory between that love of nature which Mr. Keble attributes to Virgil, and that spirit of philosophic contemplation which the poet himself manifests in the lines beginning

> " Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musæ;"

and we frankly confess that the first impression created by this entire passage is unfavourable to the poet. The easy placidity with which he seems to speak of falling back upon the old rural life, with all its traditions and superstitions, in the event of proving unfit for those scientific inquiries which he should not cease to admire, though manifestly incompatible with the truth of those traditions, jars unpleasantly upon our moral instincts. As Mr. Conington expresses it,

> " Probably there is no passage in the Georgics in which sympathy with nature is more strongly expressed than that to which I have

Digitized by Google

already adverted, where he contrasts the vocation of Lucretius with his own. He prays that he may delight in the country and the streams that freshen the valleys—that he may love river and woodland with an unambitious love. He sighs for Sperchius and Taygetus, the revel-ground of Spartan maidens; and longs for some one who will set him down in the cool glens of Hæmus, and shelter him with the giant shade of its boughs. He talks of the bliss of the man who has won the friendship of the rural gods Pan and old Sylvanus, and the sisterhood of nymphs. He occupies the rest of the book with the praises of the country life, its tranquillity and purity, its constant round of pleasant employments, its old historic and legendary renown. But he has already painted the destiny of a scientific inquirer into nature in colours which can scarcely be intended to be less glowing, and declared that his first love is centred there. The very distinctness with which Lucretius is indicated as the ideal after which he primarily aspires, is itself a presumption that the aspiration is in some sort genuine. There is, indeed, something strange and sad, if this were the place to dwell on it, in the spectacle of a man contemplating the Lucretian system and an attempt to realise the old rural belief as two feasible alternatives, and leaving the choice to be determined by his mental constitution: stranger, perhaps, and sadder still, if we suppose him to be using words without a distinct consciousness of their full meaning, and to be thinking really of the comparative aptitude for poetical purposes of the two opposite aspects of nature."

Now no doubt, if there is no other explanation of Virgil's meaning, this language is not too strong. But we would venture to suggest that the consideration we are about to submit to our readers is worthy of attention; and in order to make our meaning clear, we transcribe the entire passage:

> " Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musæ,
> Quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore,
> Accipiant, cælique vias et sidera monstrent,
> Defectus solis varios, lunæque labores;
> Unde tremor terris, qua vi maria alta tumescant
> Obicibus ruptis rursusque in se ipsa residant,
> Quid tantum Oceano properent se tinguere soles
> Hiberni, vel quæ tardis mora noctibus obstet.
> Sin, has ne possim naturæ accedere partis,
> Frigidus obstiterit circum præcordia sanguis:
> Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes;
> Flumina amem silvasque inglorius. O, ubi campi
> Spercheusque, et virginibus bacchata Lacænis
> Taygeta! o, qui me gelidis convallibus Hæmi
> Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!
> Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
> Atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum
> Subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari!
> Fortunatus et ille, deos qui novit agrestis,
> Panaque Silvanumque senem Nymphasque sorores!
> Illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum

Digitized by Google

Flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,
Aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,
Non res Romanæ perituraque regna; neque ille
Aut doluit miserans inopem, aut invidit habenti."

Now if our readers will observe this passage, they will see that it is divided into four parts, of which the first and second correspond respectively with the third and fourth. In the first two the poet touches on the delights of philosophy and the pleasure of a country life as they relate to himself; in the third and fourth, he describes them in the abstract. His first prayer is, that the muse of Lucretius may accept him amongst her votaries, and teach him the secrets of the universe; his second is, that if tried and found wanting in the qualities requisite for such knowledge, he may still retain his old love of woodland, vale, and river, and find pleasure as of yore in the plains of Sperchius, the mountain-ridges of Taygetus, and the cool recesses of Hæmus. But we have as yet no mention of the rural gods—of Pan, Sylvanus, or the Dryads; that is reserved for his general picture of rustic happiness. How blessed is the man, he then continues, who has learned the causes of things, has conquered superstition, and ceased to tremble at fate! This is the general description of the philosopher. But see, he adds, is not he too to be congratulated, after another fashion, who has never tried these paths?—

"Whose soul proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk or milky way"?

Straightway rise up before the poet's eyes all the fair old pagan myths. Fauns peer at him from behind old moss-grown stems. A white-limbed shape glides away from the embowered fountain. Yes, it *is* happiness to believe in this plenitude of life all round us, and to worship these enchanting creations, who are sometimes accessible even to mortal passion. At all events, he feels that it is not for him to disturb this ancient and beautiful creed, which the villager still loves. So, with a few words of kindly reverence, he passes away to those advantages of rural life which are common to men of all creeds—to the philosopher and the idolater equally. On the hypothesis that it was pure love of the country that prompted him to compose the Georgics, the above explanation of this passage seems in no way untenable; on the second hypothesis we have mentioned, it seems not only tenable, but probable. Nor in either case is there any thing implied by it discreditable to Virgil himself. He could not make the peasants philosophers; he could not give them a purer religion. Was it not wiser to leave them as they were? And, as regards his own belief, we cannot think the omission we have pointed out in the lines relating specially to himself to have been wholly undesigned. Why did he leave off speaking in the first person

Digitized by Google

at that particular point? Whenever he is speaking generally, we may observe that Virgil specially encourages the observance of the national religion. His invocations to the gods are full and solemn, and his injunctions to the husbandmen not to neglect the recurring festivals of the year are frequently repeated. It can hardly be doubted, therefore, that his wish was to inculcate the observance of all ancient institutions. It is only when for a moment dwelling more peculiarly on his own innermost aspirations that he drops this object out of sight; and as soon as he returns to his audience he again takes it up. Such is our answer to the moral objection contained in our last extract from Mr. Conington. To the objection that Virgil's love of natural philosophy would have disqualified him for feeling that ardent love of external nature with which Mr. Keble accredits him, we think no answer is required. In some cases it would have that effect, in some not. Nor had the natural philosophy of the ancients advanced to that stage at which it begins to interfere with our appreciation of natural beauties. It is only in some few instances that such is the case even now,—probably many of our readers will not allow so much as that,—but in Virgil's time we scarcely think it could have done so at all. On the contrary, we are far from sure that the disappearance of Neptune's trident from the waters, and of Apollo's chariot from the heavens, would not have left the mind more susceptible to the physical beauties of the universe instead of less so.

We now come to Mr. Conington's third objection, viz. that Virgil was too literary, too bookish, to have felt this genuine admiration of nature. And here again we must quote his own words, for fear we should unintentionally be doing him injustice:

"But it is difficult to conceive that a man in whose mind the ambition of imitation, the charm of recollected reading, and a taste for conventional conceptions, filled so large a space, can have found his delight and solace, at least to the extent supposed, in sympathy with external nature."

Now this is not a question of poetic power; it is a question about which every educated man is able to say something from his own experience. Do "the charms of recollected reading, and a taste for conventional conceptions," disqualify a man for "sympathy with external nature"? We fancy we know the answer that trembles on our readers' lips,—that the first, at all events, *enhances it*. It is quite possible that we may have misunderstood what Mr. Conington means by the words he uses; and we are the more inclined to believe that we must have done so, that the contrary of what we suppose to be his meaning is, as far as our own experience extends, so generally accepted as true. Were

Digitized by Google

it not Mr. Conington who had denied the fact, we should really have thought it an outrage on our readers' understanding to argue in its favour. As it is, we feel, if we may be permitted to use such an expression, "all abroad." When a man in whose opinion we are accustomed to place the greatest confidence suddenly makes an assertion subversive of our most fundamental convictions, we take some time to recover ourselves. And this must be our excuse if we fail to combat this position with becoming energy. Indeed, we can only say this, that in taking a country walk our own enjoyment is very much enhanced if we can apply scraps of our reading to the scenery about us,—if, on passing a plantation in the early spring, we recollect the "black as ashbuds in the front of March" of Mr. Tennyson, or, in walking home over the wide pastures of the midland counties on a summer's evening, we chance to recall "the long gray fields" of the same poet. Yet we stoutly refuse to yield to any living reviewer in our "sympathy for external nature." We should not omit to notice here that Professor Conington, with that honest and thoroughgoing candour which really goes a long way towards disarming all hostile criticism, acknowledges himself to be but an imperfect judge of such questions:

> "To attempt a full discussion of this opinion, would be obviously presumptuous in one who is conscious of his own deficiency in the power or habit of appreciating external nature, and so is incapable of rightly estimating those descriptive or allusive touches which undoubtedly appear throughout Virgil's poems."

We know well enough that there is another side to this question,—that the age of production and the age of appreciation are thought to be distinct. And so, in a sense, they are; for the one obviously must precede the other. So, of course, it may be said that a great poem on nature will generate a kind of artificial sympathy with its subject, and that it is from this that we derive the pleasure above spoken of. Yet this would, in the first place, be a dangerous doctrine to enforce, because it would so indefinitely narrow the sphere of original exertion; and, in the second place, it would be a difficult one to maintain, because we should never feel justified in admitting, in the present day, that any particular person's sympathy with nature was not artificial.

Mr. Merivale's theory of the Georgics is, that they are "the glorification of labour;" a view in which Professor Conington seems disposed to concur. Yet we may fairly ask, if such is his opinion, what he intends to convey by his assertion of the "unreality" of the Georgics. As we are inclined to believe that Mr. Merivale has, at all events, indicated, if he has not fully described, the source to which the Georgics owe their birth, we

Digitized by Google

shall now proceed to examine the arguments for and against his theory, as we have done in the case of Mr. Keble's. The case at present, we must remember, stands thus: if the Georgics was neither a serious treatise nor a spontaneous offspring of the poet's sympathies, the subject must have been taken up simply as a good one for the market, and all the enthusiasm displayed in it must have been assumed for the occasion; a view of the poem which, we need hardly repeat, would destroy its chief value in our eyes. We have as yet offered few positive arguments of our own in favour of the theory we have already discussed, preferring to introduce them when we come to consider the general question of Virgil's poetical rank; not so, however, with the second hypothesis, about which we shall say all we have to say at once.

In the Life of Virgil by Mr. Long, prefixed to this volume, that gentleman, in his usual decisive style, observes: "The supposition that it was written to revive the languishing condition of agriculture in Italy after the civil war, and to point out the best method, may take its place with other exploded notions. The idea of reviving the industry of a country by an elaborate poem, which few farmers would read, and still fewer would understand, requires no refutation. Agriculture is not quickened by a book, still less by a poem. It requires security of property, light taxation, and freedom of commerce." Now we need hardly point out that what a thing requires, and what at any given time it may be supposed to require, are two different matters. This ostentatious exhibition of political economy is quite misplaced; and, indeed, we doubt if Mr. Long would, on reconsideration, endorse a single sentence of the whole passage. Surely he must have forgotten at the moment what no one can know better than himself, that farming in Italy in the last century before Christ was a very different thing from what it had been in the early days of the republic, or what it is now among ourselves. The temptation of saying a smart thing must have led him into temporary forgetfulness of one of the best-known facts in Roman history. *There were no farmers* in Italy at this time. The old free yeomanry were almost entirely extinct. The land had, as a rule, passed into the hands of extensive proprietors, who employed only slave labour, and found grazing more profitable than tillage. They lived very little on their estates. And so by degrees those same occupations which had been the glory and delight of the old Roman citizen, had fallen into contempt, and manual labour was generally, as in America at the present day, held to be beneath the dignity of a freeman. *Aratro nullus honos.* To restore the soil of Italy to the dominion of the plough, to increase the home supply of grain, to revive the old race of Italian farmers,

Digitized by Google

and so to ensure a permanent nursery of those citizen-soldiers whose valour had subdued all other countries without being dangerous to their own, was one of the first objects of that great prince who was now called upon to consolidate and tranquillise a universal empire. Of the vices and demoralisation of great cities, the Roman had had ample experience in all quarters of the world; of the mischiefs of absenteeism he beheld sufficient evidence at home. To superadd to modern Roman civilisation something of the pristine purity and simplicity of the Roman character, was an object well worthy the ambition of Augustus. While to encourage a class of resident landed proprietors, and to diffuse among the voluptuous patricians of the imperial court a taste for the genial and wholesome pleasures of country life, seemed the likeliest method of accomplishing this wise and patriotic purpose. At the same time, it must be remembered that the more selfish and interested policy of self-preservation pointed to exactly the same course of action. The security of the Roman government was to be sought by reversing the system of Richelieu, and by keeping the nobles on their estates, instead of encouraging them to assemble round their sovereign. The traditions of aristocracy and popular liberty were still too fresh, the sanctity of the imperial crown was still too new, to permit of the emperor or his ministers regarding without anxiety the remnants of the old patrician houses. Rome, and not Campania or Etruria, had ever been the focus of revolutionary conspiracies. The capital, and not the provinces, had given a following to Gracchus, to Catiline, and to Brutus. The only danger that had as yet arisen in the rural districts was from the numbers and the wrongs of the servile population. Thus we see what a variety of considerations were converging to the one result. Agriculture was to be reëlevated to its place of honour. This was the central idea. But it had to be placed in a variety of different lights, and recommended to a variety of dissimilar tastes. The really energetic and patriotic landlord had to be reminded of his duty, and shown the true dignity of a great territorial position surrounded by a prosperous tenantry. The man of taste—the dilettante author—who had studied at Athens and piqued himself on his familiarity with the models of literature, had to be insensibly led towards a perception of the same truths by the charms of rural yet refined poetry and the haunting melody of an exquisite style: while the poorer classes of citizens required to be told that there was something nobler and better than hanging about a corrupt capital, and earning a hazardous livelihood by trafficking with the privileges of freemen; that hands in which ran the reddest blood of old Rome might hold the plough without disgrace: much more those of which the only

Digitized by Google

alternative was to receive or distribute bribes, or ply the trade of the assassin; to be told, in short, that in looking down upon the toil of the farmer they were insulting the memory of their ancestors; and that whatever might hold good of the rich, the only place where the poor Roman citizen could indulge the proud independence of which he boasted, was amid the scenes and occupations which had not been disdained by "Remus and his brother, and the ancient Sabines." Agriculture in its highest sense and in its lowest; the pleasures and beauties of country life, not less than its dignity and grandeur, had alike to be vindicated and adorned. The lingering reverence for the ancient faith of Italy, and the new enlightenments of the Greek philosophy, must each be appealed to in turn. The Catos must not be shocked by an Atticus, nor the Atticuses by a Cato. And over all classes was to be thrown the spell of a great magician, bidding them see in the glory and divinity of Augustus the heaven-sent influence that should regenerate the mistress of the world; resuscitate the old virtues and cultivate the new knowledge; and while maintaining the rugged hardihood and the domestic virtues which had won their mighty empire, cherish alongside of them the arts and sciences which should fit the conqueror to be a civiliser.

> "Aspera tum positis mitescent sæcula bellis:
> Cana Fides et Vesta, Remo cum fratre Quirinus
> Jura dabunt; diræ ferro et compagibus arctis
> Claudentur belli portæ; Furor impius intus,
> Sæva sedens super arma, et centum vinctus ahenis
> Post tergum nodis, fremet horridus ore cruento."

Our own view, accordingly, would be that the Georgics cannot be regarded in the light of a professed agricultural treatise, nor yet of a glorification of labour exclusively; that the design of this famous poem embraces both these ideas, and others too; but that, considering what on this hypothesis Virgil did propose to himself, it is marvellous what an amount of sound practical knowledge he has embodied in the poem,—quite enough, for instance, to serve as a guide-book to the new class of gentlemen-farmers whom it was intended to create. Our authority for this assertion is Dr. Daubeny, to whose comparison of numerous passages in the second Georgic with the processes of modern scientific agriculture Mr. Conington has not referred, though he frequently quotes Mr. Keightley as an authority on the other side. It is, perhaps, rather a pity that in a work necessarily in the hands of a multitude of young scholars, the professor has not given his reasons for assigning so much weight to Mr. Keightley, to the absolute suppression of Dr. Daubeny's opinions. If the latter is not worthy of credit, the fact should be made generally known.

Digitized by Google

In other respects Virgil has doubtless pruned and condensed, as much as he has adorned, the knowledge he derived from other writers. That he has chosen to express in thirty-seven lines what Aratus had expressed in a hundred and fourteen, proves nothing against the "reality," to use a favourite word of Mr. Conington's, of the Georgics. His rules for foretelling various kinds of weather, in which this occurs, have often been recognised as singularly truthful and accurate. That he did not give more was a matter dependent entirely on his own discretion; and if he thought he had given sufficient, there was every reason why he should avoid overloading his pages with details. But the fact, if true, that Virgil sometimes prefers the reader to the farmer proves nothing against his "reality," if the object he had in view was the cultivation of a particular taste, as much as the inculcation of a particular kind of knowledge.

Although Mr. Conington's edition of Virgil has not yet reached the Æneid, we shall nevertheless take this opportunity of expressing our views on that subject, before proceeding to a more general criticism of Virgil's poetry. The hostile critics of the Æneid may be mainly divided into those of the old and those of the new school. With the first we do not intend to meddle. The standard objections to the Virgilian epic we believe to be in the main just. The characters, with two exceptions, are tame. Some of the imagery, and many of the incidents, are copied direct from Homer, and not improved in the process. Our sympathies, and apparently the poet's sympathies too, are not with his hero, who is conducted to the accomplishment of his purpose by means of transactions to which no appeal to the overruling will of Providence can possibly reconcile us. Dido and Turnus are the hero and heroine where they ought to have been Æneas and Lavinia. These defects are undeniably injurious to the poem from the modern point of view; but it is some palliation of them that they would probably not have been conspicuous to a Roman; and, indeed, to those critics who have endeavoured to throw themselves into Virgil's position, and to contemplate his subject from his own starting-point, they have appeared either not at all, or in a very much mitigated shape. Addison, for instance, commends the character of Æneas as perfect, and rather praises the skill of the poet for enhancing the difficulties, both moral as well as physical, through which Æneas tenaciously pursued the task imposed on him by the gods. No caprice should induce the descendants of their great founder to desert that sacred soil which he had sacrificed so much to reach; for the sake of which he had resigned an established throne and a devoted mistress, had violated the laws of hospitality, and torn the betrothed bride from her lover. Mr. Merivale has pointed out the suspicion that

Digitized by Google

prevailed among the Romans that Augustus was meditating a transference of the seat of empire to the East; and he well says that "the whole Æneid may be read as a continued protest against this crime." Æneas, then, is too purely the agent of a higher will to be deeply interesting to us. There is no passion in his nature; and the perpetual intrusion of his "piety" to the abnegation of all human motives is wearisome and frigid. But this subordination of poetry to politics, however injurious in other respects, does not in our opinion make the former "unreal." The other objections we have mentioned we do not intend specially to controvert, but shall recur to them incidentally before the close of our essay.

But the accusations of the second class of critics, of which Mr. Gladstone is the representative, are of a more serious and more damaging character. The theory that Virgil has, from "a mere sordid quest of popularity," tampered with the Homeric traditions, and from a deeply-rooted untruthfulness of mind misrepresented numberless minor facts and incidents, would, if true, be as fatal to Virgil's reputation and usefulness as the objections to his other works already noticed. Yet it seems to us that almost in proportion to the gravity of these charges is the frivolity of the evidence by which it is sought to establish them. We hope our readers will not think us tedious if we refer as briefly as possible to one or two instances of what we mean. We must, however, *in limine*, protest against the doctrine that Virgil was bound in all cases to follow Homeric authority on questions of ethnology or geography. Virgil's learning on these subjects is well known, and, as Niebuhr pointed out, lent a charm to the poem in the eyes of his contemporaries which we cannot appreciate ourselves. But it is amusing to note the simplicity with which Mr. Gladstone rebukes Virgil whenever he makes a statement of this nature at variance with one of Homer's; just as a schoolmaster would rate a child for repeating his lesson wrong. However, to proceed. After premising that Western Europe has learned Homer through Virgil, and that therefore it is doubly melancholy to think of the misrepresentations of him that occur in the Æneid, Mr. Gladstone goes on to give us instances of this crime; and among others he enumerates the following:

"In describing his (Dardanus's) migration from Crete to Troja, he says:

'nondum Ilium et arces
Pergameæ steterunt: habitabant vallibus imis.'

Here he not only repeats Homer, who places Dardanus and the original settlement among the mountains, but likewise represents what is in itself improbable, as eminences and not bottoms were commonly sought

Digitized by Google

by the first colonists, with a view to security. Lastly, he is neglectful of the actual topography; for he implies that Ilium is among the hills, while it was, according to Homer's express words, and according to universal opinion, on the plain."

Now we maintain that the contrary of every one of these propositions is perfectly tenable: the words "habitabant vallibus imis" do not to our minds necessarily imply that the *arces Pergameæ* were on a hill. In the second place, *vallibus imis* does not necessarily mean the lowest valleys, but may also signify the bottoms of the mountain hollows, in which sense it is elsewhere used by Virgil. In the third place, Homer does not exactly say that Dardanus settled on an eminence. His words are:

Ἀλλ' ἔθ' ὑπωρείας ᾤκεον πολυπίδακος Ἰδης,—

ὑπωρεία being usually translated "the foot of a mountain." In the fourth place, Mr. Gladstone forgets that if Virgil has been inaccurate, Homer has on his part been careless. For though he here says that Troy was built upon the plain, ἐν πεδίῳ πεπόλισται, yet he elsewhere applies to it the epithets ὀφρυόεσσα and αἰπεινή.

A little further on Mr. Gladstone says, "In Æneid ii. 540, Virgil gives it to be understood that the city of Troy alone was the kingdom of Priam, and that the Greek camp was beyond it; for he makes Priam say of his return to the camp:

'Meque in mea regna remisit.'

But a very little further on he calls Priam

'Tot quondam populis terrisque superbum
Regnatorem Asiæ.'"

Now, really, if the propounder of this argument were not a man of Mr. Gladstone's eminence, who would not feel inclined to smile at it? Priam could only be in one place at a time. He could not bestride Asia like a colossus. If Queen Victoria were taken prisoner by the French, and then sent back to London, would it be erroneous to say that she returned *in sua regna*, because she was queen of Scotland and Ireland as well? Elsewhere he blames Virgil for calling the Greeks "Pelasgi," for speaking of "Dorica castra," for mistaking the relative size of Pelion and Ossa, for representing the Italian smiths as making greaves of silver; all which objections, however trivial in themselves, argue a considerable degree of presumption in the maker of them. For we cannot but think that Virgil knew how to use the word "Pelasgi" quite as well as Homer; and that he must have known at least as much about the silver metal of the old inhabitants of Italy as Mr. Gladstone.

We now come to the charge against him of corrupting the

Digitized by Google

Homeric characters; and here again we must make the same general protest that we have made above. Under what obligation was Virgil to accept in every instance Homer's particular version of the Trojan legend? At all events, if that was the only true one, it is not Virgil who is to blame for its corruption, but Homer's own countrymen. If Virgil had nothing else to guide him in his interpretation of those remote events than we have, he naturally would consider that he could not be far wrong in following Æschylus and Sophocles. If no other version of "the Tale of Troy" had descended alongside of Homer's, suggesting to other Greeks a different treatment of the leading characters concerned in it, Virgil would nevertheless feel that it was not his business to refute the conceptions of subsequent Ionic writers:

> "Tum decuit metuisse tuis: nunc sera querelis
> Haud justis assurgis, et irrita jurgia jactas."

Moreover, on this question Mr. Gladstone is guilty of an oversight which can never be too often or too sharply censured. It is, unfortunately, one of the commonest, and at the same time one of the most pernicious that men can be guilty of. It vitiates our estimate of past transactions and past generations, as much as it does our literary and artistic judgments. It has a constant tendency to make us unduly exaggerate our own merits, and to refer every question that is not a contemporary one to a false standard. We mean, the neglect, or the refusal, to get behind—so to speak—the works or the events we are judging. An excellent illustration of our meaning may be drawn from the history of English politics. What should we think of the violent opposition offered in the name of liberty to the Hanoverian *régime* during the first twenty years of its existence, if we looked at this period only, so to speak, from the front? That men of honour and capacity, like Wyndham and Shippen, should have fancied they were promoting the cause of liberty by offering all the obstruction in their power to parliamentary government, seems incredible, unless we pass round to the rear of their position, when their conduct becomes perfectly intelligible. The Revolution had been accomplished to prevent one man from coercing the entire nation: but this was exactly what Walpole was now doing. Parliamentary government had not yet had time to unfold its capabilities, and no model of it existed elsewhere by which the men of that day could judge of what those capabilities might be. They looked back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, because it was simply impossible for them to look forward to the reign of Queen Victoria. Now to place ourselves for a moment in the same position is what we call "getting behind" the situ-

Digitized by Google

ation; and no man can judge bygone things fairly who will not consent to do the same. To apply this to the question before us: Virgil was a Roman, writing for Romans. In proportion as he believed in the reality of the Homeric *Iliad* would be the warmth of his sympathies with the popular feeling on the subject. Here, then, we approach a dilemma which it is difficult for his critics to escape. If he really believed in the men and the events of that poem, he would naturally regard them from an antagonistic point of view, and cannot be blamed for yielding to those patriotic prejudices which mankind universally condone. If he did not believe in them, the alterations which he made would not be of any vital consequence. Under the influence of the first class of feelings the "Trojæ et patriæ communis Erinnys," applied to Helen in the second book, would be merely the Roman view of one who had deeply injured their forefathers. Under the influence of the second, it would be an allowable poetic license. But after all, the alterations, as we shall presently show in the case of Helen herself, are not so great as Mr. Gladstone represents. A graceful tribute is paid to the chivalrous character of Achilles in the second book; few of the other leading actors, except Ulysses, are described, save in passing terms, which, if not more or less coloured by the sufferings which the narrator had recently undergone, would have been thoroughly untrue to nature, however true they might have been to history.

Such being the case, it merely remains for us to consider the characters of Ulysses and Helen. The epithet of Ulysses in Homer is πολύμητις, which Homer himself may probably have intended to mean simply a man of many resources; but which the later Greeks, affected by the growth of rhetoric and sophistry, interpreted rather as a man of much art—a man skilful to persuade by argument. Now which of the two characters was Virgil, with the Greeks of his own time before him, to adopt? If he chose that which the patriotic dramatists of Athens had not scrupled to present, and which his own experience so abundantly confirmed, is he so very much to blame? In fact, the lying Greek had become a household word in Rome long before the age of Virgil; and the estimation in which the descendants of Agamemnon were held by the posterity of Anchises is expressed with as much truth as spirit in the *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Had Virgil risen superior to these prejudices, had he brought himself to leap over the gap of so many centuries, and to represent the Greeks as Homer represented them, we don't know what guarantee we have that he would have been telling us historic truth; for Homer might have favoured his countrymen as much as Virgil favoured his. But even had he done so, his poem would have been at best

Digitized by Google

but a "faultless monster," *i. e.* exhibiting one kind of truthfulness at the expense of another. Briefly, such an Æneid as Mr. Gladstone desiderates would have been an anachronism; and we only hope that he may not return from his present mission with his mind considerably opened upon this point, and with a much better understanding than he ever had before of the *ars Pelasga* and the *fandi fictor Ulysses*.

In defence of Helen, Mr. Gladstone displays a chivalrous living enthusiasm which, perhaps more than any thing else, shows how completely he has identified himself with his subject. He is actually angry—visibly, humanly angry—with Virgil for the portrait he has drawn of her. She is to him what Mary of Scotland is to Aytoun, or Marie Antoinette to Burke, a beautiful and maligned woman—an actual historic character, for whose fair fame every gentleman's sword should leap from its scabbard. With this genial and gentlemanlike spirit we have all possible sympathy. We quite admit that, in Helen's case, "vice lost all its grossness." Yet nevertheless the stern facts remain:

> "Many drew swords and died. Where'er I came,
> I brought calamity."

This was the charge against Helen. In this light she *was* the *communis Erinnys* of Greece and Troy—helplessly so, it may be; but that is a plea of which the despairing general, with his native city in flames around him, the cries of his slaughtered countrymen and ravished countrywomen ringing in his ears, and his own nearest and dearest relatives exposed to the same fate, was not very likely to take cognisance. It was not very probable that Æneas, under these circumstances, would have stood repeating to himself the

> οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιούς
> τοιῇδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν

of the Trojan elders. The reflections which Virgil attributes to him are obviously the natural ones for the occasion:

> "Scilicet hæc Spartam incolumis patriasque Mycenas
> Aspiciet, partoque ibit regina triumpho?
> Conjugiumque, domumque, patres, natosque videbit,
> Iliadum turba et Phrygiis comitata ministris?
> Occiderit ferro Priamus? Troja arserit igni?
> Dardanium toties sudarit sanguine litus?
> Non ita."

The charge brought against her by Deiphobus in the sixth Æneid is to be explained in the same simple manner. It is but another adumbration of the bitter feelings which the vanquished were certain to entertain against the cause of their calamities, however small might be her own individual guilt.

Digitized by Google

Nor do these ebullitions of bitterness at all clash with the friendly spirit in which Homer represents her to have been received among the members of Priam's family. The blow had not then fallen—"Troy was still standing, and the lofty citadel of Priam yet remained,"—hopes of a peaceful accommodation were still strong; and it was easy, under these circumstances, for the divine beauty and unaffected self-reproaches of the fairest of women to exercise their natural influence. The outburst of passion at sight of her, which Virgil ascribes to his hero, is by no means inconsistent with the existence of a previous regard for her. It is in adversity that we grow hard-hearted; and we entertain very different feelings towards the cause of our misfortunes from what we entertain towards the suppliant of our clemency. We do not see, therefore, that Virgil's language in reference to the wife of Menelaus is necessarily contradictory of Homer; or that we cannot suppose the same man to have joined in the admiring exclamation of the elders, and likewise in the passionate invective of Æneas. In fact, Mr. Gladstone himself admits as much when he says that Achilles calls Helen *ῥιγεδάνη* when her abduction has produced to him the bitter and harrowing affliction of the death of Patroclus.

One other point yet remains:—the purity of Helen. Now we think that on this subject a great deal too much has been said. Homer, as it seems to us, represents Helen as a person acting under the direct impulse of the gods—*Διὸς ἐτελείετο βουλή*. Venus interferes personally to bring her to the bed of Alexander. As such her conduct was removed from within the pale of that jurisdiction which determines conventional morality. We think, indeed, that this is the most charitable view that can be taken of her conduct, as well as of her husband's. Mr. Gladstone seems to consider that her reconciliation to Menelaus is a proof of her own innocence. To the majority of mankind it will seem much more like a proof of Menelaus's indelicacy. This point, however, has been so admirably put by the present Professor of Modern History in his essay on the position of women among the ancient Greeks and Romans, albeit a prize-essay, that we shall satisfy ourselves with recommending it to the perusal of our readers.

But we must not forget, too, that Virgil had an additional reason for placing the transgression of Helen in as odious a light as possible. His purpose in the Æneid, as in the Georgics, being the recommendation of all the old Roman ideas, chastity, of course, was one of the foremost it behoved him to celebrate. The evil consequences of incontinence, as exemplified in the case both of Helen and Clytemnestra, could not be too strongly insisted on. It is curious that the Greeks seem to have had no

Digitized by Google

word exactly corresponding to the Roman *castitas*. There is certainly no such word in Homer. And unquestionably the spirit in which the abduction of Helen is treated throughout the entire Iliad is quite inconsistent with our belief in the existence of any Lucretias or Virginias among the sisters and daughters of the Grecian chieftains. We scarcely see how it is possible for any candid reader of the Iliad and Odyssey not to acknowledge that matters of this nature are alluded to with a laxity that has quite disappeared from the pages of the Æneid. The μίσγῃ φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ is a phrase of such constant occurrence as to leave us in no doubt that the men and women of that era regarded what we call immorality from a totally different point of view. And it is difficult not to believe that Virgil was specially anxious to steer clear of any thing that could seem to palliate Helen's offence in an age when the city of Rome was already beginning to show symptoms of deserving the epithet of "Græca."

An exhaustive dissertation on the merits of Virgil as a poet would oblige us to reopen the whole question at issue between the poetry of a rude and the poetry of a civilised age. To do so would accord neither with the space we have prescribed to ourselves, nor with the intention of our present article. Nevertheless there are a few general considerations upon this point which we feel bound to offer, and a few examples of Virgil's original poetic power to which it will be necessary to refer in order to complete our statement. We can hope to suggest little that is new; and we shall be satisfied if we are able to pluck one or two anciently received opinions from the waves of hostile criticism which threaten to submerge them. Upon one branch of this subject we feel that little need be said. Virgil's claims to admiration as the poet of rural life have met with the most catholic acknowledgment: *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*. Mr. Conington confesses to the consciousness of a certain defect in himself which disqualifies him from passing an authoritative judgment; and as the only critic of importance who leans towards an unfavourable opinion is thus self-disabled, we are relieved from the trouble of argument. But in any case such a point would be difficult of proof from internal evidence. It is curious, that in a poem especially dedicated to country life there should be fewer set descriptions of external nature than in the Æneid. We must take the Georgics as a whole. It is the spirit with which Virgil throws himself into his subject, the minuteness of his observations, and the employment of epithets by which he seems to be recording familiar and local impressions, that appeal to a lover of the country far more than elaborate pictures of valleys, grottos, and vineyards. The ploughshare shining in the furrow, the whiteness of the grass at morn-

Digitized by Google

ing—*dum mane novum, dum gramina canent*, the victorious steed struck down by disease, the moss clustering about stagnant water, the black Galæsus winding through the yellow corn-lands,—speak a language of their own to sympathetic readers, whose ruling of the case has hitherto been undisturbed by less congenial critics. In this particular, however, we need fear no unjust detraction from Virgil's popularity. This is a matter that must always rectify itself while the Georgics continue to be read. He who refers to them with pleasure among country scenes will not believe that Virgil was only making so much capital out of his own rural experience; for he would not, in that case, have imparted any pleasure. Such a reader will see in the paucity of long descriptive passages merely a proof that Virgil's appreciation of the country was the countryman's and not the townsman's appreciation, and will never, we think, be persuaded into wishing that Virgil had written less like himself and more like Alexander Smith.

We shall preface our remarks upon the Æneid with the following quotation from the *Edinburgh Review*:* "No doubt nature is exceedingly various; but the capital eminences, the choicest points of view, are limited; and when these have been once seized upon, we must either follow in the steps of others, or turn aside to humbler and less practicable subjects." Now we do not endorse this remark in its integrity, because in our opinion it is only true as long as we use the word 'nature' in a limited sense. For instance, in the essay from which we have extracted it, it is applied to the drama, a form of poetry to which it is certainly less applicable than the epic. The truth seems to be, that the more the poet depends upon the play of human passions the wider becomes his field of operations; and that it narrows in exact proportion to his rejection or neglect of that element. Thus we see in pastoral poetry, where external nature is every thing, and the human beings are created for the sake of the picture, rather than the picture for the sake of them, that the ingenuity of mankind has failed in presenting us with a single variation of the type sufficiently marked to deserve the title of original. If from the pastoral we proceed to the epic, we find ourselves a long way in advance; but we still see the operation of the same law. Here human actions are the prominent feature; the scene or scenery but the background. But here, too, invariable custom has limited the character of the events in which the actors take part to those grand public transactions which must always bear more or less resemblance to each other. Battles, sieges, and shipwrecks, the foundation and destruction of empires, all "the sad stories of the death of kings," are distinguished by a family likeness, of which the greater poet is pro-

* May 1823.

Digitized by Google

bably more conscious than the less, and strives accordingly to make the subject his own by every conceivable device: by the number of his episodes, and the splendour of his diction; or else by descending to greater intimacy with his characters, and taxing all his art to describe the working of their respective passions. Yet when all is done, it is inevitable that the events in epic poetry should be greater than the actors, and that the grandeur of those parts of it which are common should overshadow those which may possibly be peculiar. Hence, although in place of one pastoral poet we have perhaps a dozen whom the world has consented to acknowledge as epic poets, still how small is that number compared with the next class of writers, namely the dramatic! For here the individual begins to emerge. The revolution at Thebes fades into indistinctness before the sorrows of Œdipus, as the destruction of Troy before those of Hecuba. All Scotland might be lost and won without diverting our minds from the contemplation of Macbeth and his temptress. And as the phases of humanity and the workings of the human heart present the poet with an almost inexhaustible variety of material, as long as the requisite incidents can be found, so long we may be sure that tragedy will flourish. If the progress of civilisation diminishes the former, it is to that that we owe the present silence of Melpomene, and not to any necessary sameness in her successive productions. If we take one step further, we see the process complete, and the lyrist, disencumbered of all external circumstances, roaming over an endless domain of poetry, which is likely to be widened instead of contracted by advancing knowledge. Of his peculiar temptations, and the magnitude of his failures in proportion to the multitude of his opportunities, it is not our province to speak. We must return to Virgil; and ask ourselves in what way the character of his epic is affected by the classification here given.

We have already stated what we acknowledge to be the defects in the Æneid; we may add to the list, the slowness with which the action proceeds in the first six books. The introduction of the third book, though necessary perhaps to the object which he had in view, namely, to impress upon his countrymen the strength, or, if we might so speak, the obstinacy of the divine will, which planted his new empire at Rome, is still an artistic error. It cools our interest in the story, and, moreover, places Æneas in a somewhat undignified light. We are irresistibly reminded of a vagrant who is ever being told to move on. To have carried us fresh from the storm of Troy, and the desperate gallantry with which Æneas struggled to the last, straight to the court of Dido and the blandishments of love, would have produced a far more pleasing effect. In the next place, we must always

Digitized by Google

consider the fifth book as a superfluous imitation of Homer, and an equal clog with the third to the free current of the story. But these points being conceded, and the general imitation of Homer, which Virgil seems to have accepted as a necessity, fairly admitted, we have now to consider what was Virgil's success in those parts of his poem *which undoubtedly are his own*. It is, in our opinion, by these that he must stand or fall; and it is therefore to this point that we wish to recall the attention of our readers from the diatribes of his latest critics. We are prepared, then, fearlessly to assert, that in his insight into human passion, love, grief, and rage, his singular power of conveying the wished-for idea to the reader, in his descriptions of sublime and terrible events, and in the delineation and appreciation of external nature, he stands on a level with his predecessor, and in that peculiar "sentiment" which is the growth of civilisation is naturally his superior.

We need not surely dwell on the many wonderful beauties of the fourth Æneid. We envy not the man who is not transported with enthusiastic admiration as he reads those two exquisite passages, 63-90 and 450-473. Inexorable space, alas, forbids us to quote them entire, but some lines we must make room for:

"Nunc media Æneam secum per mœnia ducit,
Sidoniasque ostentat opes, urbemque paratam;
Incipit effari, mediaque in voce resistit:
Nunc eadem, labente die, convivia quærit,
Iliacosque iterum demens audire labores
Exposcit, pendetque iterum narrantis ab ore.
Post, ubi digressi, lumenque obscura vicissim
Luna premit, suadentque cadentia sidera somnos,
Sola domo mœret vacua, stratisque relictis
Incubat: illum absens absentem auditque videtque.
Aut gremio Ascanium, genitoris imagine capta,
Detinet, infandum si fallere possit amorem.
Non cœptæ assurgunt turres; non arma juventus
Exercet, portusve aut propugnacula bello
Tuta parant: pendent opera interrupta, minæque
Murorum ingentes, æquataque machina cœlo."

Again, after describing in language of unrivalled beauty the portents that seemed every where to obtrude themselves on the miserable queen:

"Agit ipse furentem
In somnis ferus Æneas; semperque relinqui
Sola sibi, semper longam incomitata videtur
Ire viam, et Tyrios deserta quærere terra.
Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina Pentheus,
Et solem geminum, et duplices se ostendere Thebas;
Aut Agamemnonius scenis agitatus Orestes,
Armatam facibus matrem et serpentibus atris
Cum fugit, ultricesque sedent in limine Diræ."

Digitized by Google

In describing the effects of his disappointment upon Turnus, Virgil is equally wonderful. The first feelings of indignant surprise, mingled with a confident contempt for his opponent, gradually swelling into burning rage and gallant determination as the true magnitude of the danger begins to dawn upon him, and changing into fierce and reckless despair as a conviction that the gods are adverse, gradually becomes stronger and stronger, are wrought up by the poet into a picture of surpassing tenderness and grandeur. There is an element of weakness, if weakness it can be called, in Turnus which makes us love him all the more, and which Virgil keeps in sight by a variety of delicate touches and allusions which are infinitely affecting. What we mean by weakness is simply this, that he is fond of all the pursuits and pleasures of his age, that he loves life, and, like Claudio, cannot repress his horror at being cut off from its enjoyments. The picture of this proud, brave, affectionate nature checked suddenly in his career of youthful happiness when life was opening before him in all its fairest colours, is touching to the last degree. The last book of the Æneid opens with the proposal of Turnus to settle the question at issue by single combat between himself and Æneas. He sees that the people are beginning to waver, are impatient of the sufferings of war, and apprehensive of the final issue. He chafes sorely under this change of feeling, which seems like a direct imputation on himself; but in that case he will only be too ready to accept that part which many unmistakable signs have shown that the people are desirous he should play. He will only be too ready to prove his manhood on Æneas, or perish in the encounter. For what would life be to him, as he fancies, without the possession of Lavinia:

"Illo quæratur conjux Lavinia campo."

Then follow the treaty, and the arrangements for the combat, for which Turnus now retires to prepare. The pleasure which he takes in his horses, his chariot, and his arms, is glanced at in passing; while no love story was ever better told than in the few lines describing the tears and blushes of Lavinia joined to the entreaties of her mother that he would desist from his enterprise, and the momentary irresolution which they seem to create:

"Illum turbat amor, figitque in virgine vultus."

But as he gazes, he fears but too truly that to resign the combat is to resign her, and is incited to fresh ardour at the thought. But now again the people begin to feel renewed sympathy for their youthful chief; as they gaze on his downcast eye and his worn and haggard cheek,

"Tabentesque genæ, et juvenali in corpore pallor,"

Digitized by Google

they begin to feel ashamed of their own pusillanimity. The feeling grows infectious and spreads rapidly; and as our readers know, the violation of the treaty, after the fashion of the same event in Homer, is the result. Observe again the framework of Homer, but replete with the proper thought and life of an independent poet. The end of this story is known to all our readers; and to us, we confess, has always seemed far more affecting than the Πριαμικαὶ τύχαι, which passed into a proverb with the ancients.

The whole final scene between Æneas and Turnus is full of sad and affectionate commiseration for the latter's fate, which quite eclipses our gratification at the ultimate triumph of the Trojan cause. The beautiful illustration of Turnus's sensation when the gods sapped his strength, and made surrounding objects seem to swim before him, is admirable:

> "Ac velut in somnis, oculos ubi languida pressit
> Nocte quies, nequidquam avidos extendere cursus
> Velle videmur, et in mediis conatibus ægri
> Succidimus; non lingua valet, non corpore notæ
> Sufficiunt vires, nec vox aut verba sequuntur:
> Sic Turno, quacumque viam virtute petivit,
> Successum dea dira negat. Tum pectore sensus
> Vertuntur varii. Rutulos aspectat et urbem,
> Cunctaturque metu, telumque instare tremiscit;
> Nec quo se eripiat, nec qua vi tendat in hostem,
> Nec currus usquam videt, aurigamve sororem."

That last pitiful look round for help, the wistful farewell to the bright and living world, is beautiful indeed. It was precisely on delineations of this kind that Virgil felt he had to fall back, if he would vindicate his own originality.

Another instance of the tender and beautiful sentiment in which Virgil excels is to be found in that description of Evander on his death-bed, which seems clearly to have suggested to Lord Byron the well-known lines in the *Giaour:*

> "Who that hath bent him o'er the dead
> Ere the first day of death is fled;
> The first dark day of nothingness,
> The last of danger and distress,
> *Before Decay's effacing fingers*
> *Have swept the lines where beauty lingers.*"

Of the sublime in Virgil we have numerous and splendid instances. What can be finer than the picture of ruined magnificence conveyed to us by the few lines in the second book, describing the first rush of the Greeks into Priam's palace?

> "Apparet domus intus, et atria longa patescunt;
> Apparent Priami, et veterum penetralia rerum,
> Armatosque vident stantes in limine primo."

Digitized by Google

In the same book his picture of the gods engaged in the destruction of the devoted city is singularly grand; but there is another passage in the seventh book which, being perhaps less known, we prefer to quote, as we cannot quote both. It is the Fury exciting the peasantry against their Trojan visitors:

> "At sæva e speculis tempus dea nacta nocendi
> Ardua tecta petit stabuli, et de culmine summo
> Pastorale canit signum, cornuque recurvo
> Tartaream intendet vocem: qua protenus omne
> Contremuit nemus, et silvæ intonuere profundæ,
> Audiit et Triviæ longe lacus; audiit amnis
> Sulfurea Nar albus aqua fontesque Veleni;
> Et trepidæ matres pressere ad pectora natos."

Sir Walter Scott probably had not this passage in his eye when he penned those stirring lines in "The Shepherd's Tale," commencing,

> "The brand he forsook, and the horn he took
> To 'say a gentle sound;
> But so wild a blast from the bugle brast,
> That the Cheviot rocked around.
>
> From Forth to Tees, from seas to seas,
> The awful bugle rung;
> On Carlisle wall and Berwick withal
> To arms the warder sprung."

But the resemblance is very remarkable, and has not to our knowledge been pointed out before. The appearance of Allecto to Turnus, the fury of the Latian women, and several other passages, might yet be quoted if our limits allowed, or if any thing were wanting after the quotations given to establish Virgil's claim to a comprehension of the true sublime.

One word more on a characteristic of Virgil, noticed by Mr. Conington, and we have done. That gentleman alludes to the constant introduction of proper names by the poet as an objectionable feature, and seems as if he considered it to spring from a lack of original freshness. Now there are two sides to this question. In those obvious similes, for instance, which all epics use in common, Virgil, by force of what we have already said, would endeavour so to use them as to add features of his own, as well as to render them acceptable to a civilised age. When once a warrior has been likened to a mountain, we must give up the illustration, unless we awaken the reader's imagination by, as it were, bringing the mountain nearer to him, and giving him a little picture on which the eye can rest independent of the resemblance to which he is inviting attention. Thus Homer says of

Digitized by Google

Hector, that he rushed on ὄρει νιφόεντι ἐοικώς; Virgil of Æneas,

> "Quantus Athos, aut quantus Eryx, aut ipse coruscis
> Quum fremit ilicibus quantus, gaudetque nivali
> Vertice, se attollens pater Appenninus ad auras."

This is an excellent illustration of what we mean; and if it be a weakness likely to be shared in common by almost all poets who have to treat in a cultivated age subjects already treated of in a rude one, Milton is addicted to the same practice even more than Virgil. Satan stands "like Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved:" the moon is viewed by the Tuscan artist "from the top of Fesolé or in Valdarno;" the angel forms are numerous as autumnal leaves "in Vallombrosa." But why multiply instances of what every one knows to be a fact? And as to Virgil's *Hyblæis apibus* and *Cyrnæas taxos*, all that we have said about his introduction of Sicilian scenery will cover these offences too.

We now take leave of our readers somewhat sooner than we could have wished; but if we have not worked out all that we originally proposed to ourselves, we trust we have said enough to induce young scholars to examine the question for themselves, and not to be led away by any specious appearance of profundity into rejecting literary canons that have stood the test of long ages of criticism.

•

Art. V. — COUNT MIOT DE MELITO AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

Mémoires du Comte Miot de Melito, ancien Ministre, Ambassadeur, Conseiller d'Etat, et Membre de l'Institut. 3 vols. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères. 1858.

These volumes are a valuable accession to the mass of *mémoires pour servir à l'histoire*, in which French literature abounds. As a general rule, such memoirs are qualified to answer any purpose rather than that of furnishing materials for history. Piquant and scandalous, they are among the most attractive light literature in the world. But they are seldom to be depended on. Too often their express object is to vindicate or discredit, at all hazards, particular persons or parties. Even when this is not the case, anecdote-mongering is so evident in their pages as to render them suspicious. French *littérateurs*

Digitized by Google

possess the *raconteur's* art in perfection; and that they should surrender a good story to troublesome historic doubts, is a sacrifice scarcely to be expected. You might as well ask an actor to give up a telling "point," on the ground that it is out of character. Count Miot's memoirs are, we are inclined to think, an exception to this rule. The author may often be mistaken; but there is a simple straightforward air about him which gives us confidence that he at least believes what he says. He was in the habit (General de Fleischmann, his son-in-law and editor, tells us) of writing down every evening what he had seen and heard during the day. From the notes thus made the memoirs before us have been compiled, unaltered except by the omission of matters of merely private and family interest.

Count Miot's veracity has not, however, escaped rude question. His estimate of Lucien Bonaparte is a low one. He speaks of "the political immorality, the civil dishonesty, of his administration" as minister of the interior, "the shameful extortions, the insatiable cupidity, of the agents by whom he was surrounded." Of his marriage with Madame Jubertou, "the divorced wife of a stockbroker at Paris, by whom he had had a child the year before," he says, "he thus gave the name of Bonaparte to a woman whose beauty and intelligence were, in truth, very remarkable, but whose reputation was under suspicion" (vol. ii. p. 114).

He reports the following remark of Napoleon to Joseph Bonaparte, on the alleged authority of the latter:

> "I know that you are incapable of a crime, and that whatever may be the advantages which you would derive from my death, you would never purchase them by an attempt on my life (*un attentat*). I do not think so of Lucien; and that is why I have got rid of him, and why I shall never recall him" (vol. ii. p. 238).

Our readers will recollect the remarkable correspondence to which these imputations gave occasion. The Prince Pierre Napoleon, Lucien's only surviving son, naturally indignant at these "outrages of Miot against his father," chose to consider General de Fleischmann, who had given them currency, an accessory after the fact, and challenged him to mortal combat. By way of keeping the meditated duel a profound secret, he sent a copy of his challenge for publication in the *Times*. Afterwards, in consideration of General de Fleischmann's age, he transferred the challenge—duly notifying the same in the public prints—to General de Fleischmann's son. Here the foolish affair seems to have ended. The younger Fleischmann could scarcely be expected to feel any warm interest in a

Digitized by Google

quarrel, like Touchstone's lie, "three times removed." With the prince it was different. The Bonapartes, though domiciled in France, are still in blood and feeling Corsicans. The spirit of the vendetta, or hereditary feud, is strong in them. The only result of the correspondence was to draw attention to Miot's book, and to afford amusement in every saloon in Europe,—wherever, in short, the *Times* penetrates. Whatever truth there may have been in Miot's charges, it was right that Lucien's son should refuse to believe them; only he did not take the wisest way of refutation.

In England, there has been always something of a kindly feeling towards Lucien Bonaparte. He had more both of intellect and courage than any other of his family, the Emperor excepted. But for his spirited conduct on the 19th of Brumaire, Napoleon might never have been First Consul; and the subsequent history of France and Europe would have been different,—how different it is useless to conjecture. He refused to become a *roi fainéant* at his brother's bidding. There was dignity in his retirement from political and family intrigues to the privacy of his Italian estate, and in his devotion there to the quiet pursuits of literature and art,—to the composition of unread and unreadable epics, and the collection of Etruscan antiquities. After twelve years of alienation, he joined Napoleon again during the perilous crisis of the Hundred Days. His courage held out when that of every one else had failed; and he still counselled resistance when the Emperor himself had no heart for any thing but abdication. One of his daughters, at least, seems to have inherited his spirit. After the king and princes of Spain had been entrapped at Bayonne into surrender of their kingdom, Napoleon proposed to adopt the Crown-Prince Ferdinand, on condition of his marrying a niece of his. Lucien's eldest daughter was selected.

"The young lady refused, and protested that she would never give her hand to a parricide. 'In that case,' she was told, 'you have no other part to take than that of going to America.' 'Very well, I will go,' she replied,—'*Hé bien, j'irai,' répondit-elle*" (vol. iii. p. 146).

Lucien actually set sail for the United States, but was taken by the English and brought to this country. We have devoted perhaps too much space to the episode of a duel that neither challenger nor challenged ever thought of fighting, and to the matters rising out of it. We return to our author.

Count Miot's memoirs begin with the convocation of the States-General in 178[illegible], and close with the final overthrow of Napoleon in 1815. They do not, of course, furnish a complete history of this period. "The end I propose to myself," says the

Digitized by Google

author, "is, not to copy what has been written before (*d'écrire d'après d'autres écrits*), but to say only what I saw, and how I saw it." Count Miot was excellently placed as an observer. He held office under all the governments which came into existence between 1788 and 1815, that of the first restoration alone excepted. He was rather annoyed at being "excluded from the council of state" under Louis XVIII.; but took the oath of fidelity to him, and—joined Napoleon as soon as he landed from Elba. Count Miot was not without a political conscience, but it was an accommodating one. He had a great reverence for governments *de facto*, and never thought it wise to kick against the pricks. Prudence was perhaps his most conspicuous, though not his sole virtue. In the doggrel verse of the time,

> "De peur de quelque taloche,"

he was

> ". . . . . toujours d'avis
> D'avoir caché dans la poche
> L'aigle et la fleur-de-lys."

He began public life as a clerk in the war-office, and retained through life a *clerkly* sense of duty. His highest moral inspiration seems to have been that of serving his employers to the best of his ability in whatsoever department they might please to place him. He no more thought of "going out" when the monarchy became a republic, when the authority of the National Convention succumbed to the Committee of Public Safety, when the 9th of Thermidor destroyed the Terrorists and transferred power to the Directory, or under Napoleon's successive usurpations, than an English under-secretary of state does in consequence of a ministerial change. We believe him to have acted up to his own narrow idea of political honesty, and not to have been, in the worst sense of the term, unprincipled. This is not a very high or heroic type of character; but men of such a type are necessary in troubled times, if the every-day business of government is to be carried on.

Miot was born at Versailles in 1762, and, as we have said, commenced his public career in the war-office, in which his father was one of the principal clerks. In September 1788 he was sent, in the capacity of commissary, to the *camp d'instruction* formed at St. Omer under the command of Prince de Condé. The division to which Miot was attached was known as "the model division." Its general officers, who had acquired the name of *les grands faiseurs*, were enthusiasts in behalf of the rigid Prussian system of military discipline, and strove to introduce it among their troops. The attempt was ill-timed, and any thing but successful. The army shared the national dis-

Digitized by Google

affection, and were indisposed to new restrictions. The younger officers expressed their feelings in epigrams on the *grands faiseurs*, and organised insults towards them; and, hardest to bear of all, purposely failed in their military evolutions. Political discussion was rife in the camp. Calonne, perhaps the most unprincipled and disastrous finance-minister the world ever saw, had quitted office the year before; and Brienne, archbishop of Sens, whose sufficient excuse for all his failures is that he succeeded Calonne, was in the thick of his troubles with the parliaments as to the registration of the edicts of taxations. He endeavoured to cut the knot by depriving them of their political power, and vesting it in a new body to be called the "plenary court." Their protests were answered by *lettres de cachet*, which produced fresh protests. The provincial parliaments supported that of Paris. The affair of D'Espréménil was fresh in every recollection. All that was gained was promises that the States-General should be convoked in not less than five years, that the national accounts should be published, and that the execution of the project of the plenary court should be suspended.

With this reminder as to the state of affairs in France, the reader will better appreciate Miot's description of the feeling prevalent in the camp at St. Omer.

"The enterprises of De Brienne's ministry formed the subject of every conversation: the resistance of the parliaments was warmly applauded; the conduct of the court was pitilessly blamed, its disorders exposed and exaggerated. The Count Charles Lameth, colonel of the Cuirassiers, was at the head of the malcontents, and already publicly avowed the opinions which afterwards acquired for him so much celebrity. Grave discussions on the rights of peoples, and on the unavoidable necessity of a great change, were mingled in this way with sarcasms and epigrams directed unceasingly against the military innovators. The English officers, who had crossed the straits in order to witness the manœuvres of the camp, were, on the contrary, the object of public admiration and affection: these, it was said, are free men,—these are the models we ought to follow, and not the soldier-machines of a despot king" (vol. i. p. 4).

When those whose business it is blindly to obey and promptly to act begin to discuss and demur,—when the secular arm disowns the authority of the secular head,—the dissolution of the body-corporate has set in. On Miot's return to Versailles, after less than a month's absence, he found a great change. The monarchical forms still remained, but the spirit seemed to have left them. The unfortunate archbishop, getting deeper and deeper in financial perplexities, laid hold of money which did not belong to the state, and had recourse in his

Digitized by Google

despair to paper. His dismissal, with a cardinal's hat to console him under his disgrace, was followed by Neckar's recall, too late to do more than delay the catastrophe. The French Revolution commenced when the States-General met at Versailles, on the 1st of May in the year 1789.

Count Miot, too young then to take any very prominent part in public affairs, passes very rapidly over, or does not mention at all, the events which led to the destruction of the monarchy, the conversion of the *Tiers-Etat* into the National Assembly, the taking of the Bastille, the banquet of the 2d October, the confiscation of the property of the Church, the king's attempted flight from Paris to Montmedy, the bloody history of the struggle between Girondists and Jacobins in the legislative assembly and the National Convention. A reviewer of his book can have no excuse for not following his example. The real interest of his memoirs is of later date, and attaches to his connection with the Bonapartes. From October 1789 to August 10th, 1792, he discharged the duties first of *chef de bureau*, and afterwards of *chef de division*, under the different ministers who succeeded each other in the department of war. He was one of those proscribed, and an attempt was made to arrest him, after the attack on the palace on the day last named. By the merest accident, however, he had left Paris to visit his wife and daughter at Versailles that very morning. But for this, the massacres of the 2d September would probably have had another victim. Returning to Paris on the 12th August, he learned the dangers he had as yet only half escaped. He deemed it best quietly to resume his duties in the war-department; and had the good fortune to be forgotten. Miot was at this time, he says, "a constitutional monarchist, a moderate, a *feuillant*." He therefore thought that some obscurer post would be safer for him; and having come to an understanding with Joseph Servan, then war-minister, he resigned on the ground of ill-health, and became controller-general in a department which, we imagine, corresponds to our commissariat (*dans l'administration des étapes et convois militaires*). Under Beurnonville he returned to his old situation in the war-office. On Dumouriez's desertion to the Austrians, after the defeat at Nerwinde, Beurnonville was one of those who, being sent by the Convention in April 1793 to arrest him, were unfortunately arrested by him. His place at the head of the war-department was filled by Bouchotte, under whom Miot again felt himself insecure. When Deforgues, the *protégé* of Danton, but with whom Miot "had had continual relations," was made foreign minister (24th June 1793), he offered Miot the post of secretary-general under him, which Miot accepted. At his

Digitized by Google

principal's table he met frequently the chiefs of the Reign of Terror,—Danton, Lacroix, Fabre d'Eglantine, Legendre, Camille Desmoulins, Robespierre. His sketches of these remarkable men, though not so vivid and sharply defined as the delineations of some picturesque historians who describe them at second hand, and who are apt to take known details as points of departure rather than any thing else, are yet worth extracting as portraitures from the life.

"Danton, the most remarkable of those whom I have just named, had a hideous face (*une figure hideuse*); his figure was athletic; in this particular one saw in him a kind of resemblance to Mirabeau. But the countenance of the latter was marked by a livid paleness, while that of the former had a reddish-brown tinge, and was very animated. The tones of Danton's voice were imposing; he spoke with a warmth and an energy which seemed natural. His elocution was full of life, and his remarks were always accompanied with violent gestures. At table he generally took the lead (*tenait généralement la clé*) in the conversation, where he made frequent use of figurative expressions: 'The wheels of the car of revolution shall crush its enemies,'—'The Revolution is like Saturn, it will devour its children,'—and other remarks of the same kind. He had a profound contempt for the Girondists, and regarded them as fools, who flinched from the consequences of their own principles. He did not disguise his taste for pleasure, and laughed at the silly scruples of conscience and delicacy. . . . . The cynicism of his character pervaded what he said, for he despised the hypocrisy of some of his colleagues, and the sarcasms with which he attacked that vice were principally levelled at Robespierre; but he did not dare to name him.

Fabre d'Eglantine expressed himself gracefully and with a kind of affectation. In spite of the pains he took to accommodate himself to the forms of the revolutionary language, one saw that they were not congenial to him, and the tone of a refined education penetrated through a coarse envelopment. When the conversation turned on some literary subject, which rarely happened, he took the lead in it, and displayed extensive acquirements. An admirer of Molière, he spoke of him with enthusiasm; and I have heard him give utterance to reflections at once piquant and novel on the writings of this great genius. Among other things, I recollect that one day, in discussing the merit of the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, he said to us, 'It is a great mistake to believe that in this piece Molière intended to insult the middle classes (*la bourgeoisie*). It is the nobility that he had in view and has immolated. There is, indeed, a kind of ridicule cast on the insanity of a *bourgeois* who would fain pass for noble; but M. Jourdain, with his oddities, is nevertheless a very gallant fellow; he is a good husband, a good father, an obliging and generous friend. The scoundrel of the play is the gentleman, Dorante, at once flatterer and swindler. He is a dishonoured wretch who merits nothing but our contempt. It required all Molière's talent to hoodwink people as to his real design,

Digitized by Google

and at the same time a great amount of courage to venture thus to expose on the stage, before the very eyes of the court, the vices of courtiers.' This way of regarding Molière's genius shows an enlightened observer, and Fabre d'Eglantine has proved by his dramatic pieces that he could appreciate and felicitously imitate the writer he had taken as his model. Accused as an accomplice of Danton, he perished with him."

We are afraid Lord Macaulay's criticism of "the Dramatists of the Restoration" would apply here; and that it was Molière's intention to make M. Jourdain's domestic virtues one of the ridiculous elements in his character, and to hold up to the admiration of a sympathising audience the vices of the fine gentleman.

"Legendre, butcher of Paris, was a man of small stature, and had a face much pitted with marks of the small-pox. He spoke with extreme readiness. Gifted with a natural eloquence very remarkable, but without any cultivation, his speeches and his conversation abounded with original and happy traits. An ardent patriot, and betrayed into the greatest revolutionary excesses, he was, no one can doubt it, at least of good faith, and followed singly the impulses of a soul passionately devoted to liberty, but misguided, and never held in check by the bridle either of reason or reflection. I often wondered to hear this man, quitting the Convention, where he had just supported the most sanguinary propositions, and returned to private life, boast to us of its delights with an accent of truth impossible to imitate; speak of the domestic happiness which he enjoyed, of his wife, and of his children, just as the best of fathers, the best of husbands, would have done; become affected sometimes, and betray his emotion by the tears that rolled from his eyes. Incomprehensible mixture of political ferocity and social virtues! proving that man, in the extreme flexibility of his imagination, can unite in himself the strangest contradictions. A partisan of Danton, whom he regarded, as he said, as the Hercules of the Revolution, Legendre was inexhaustible in encomiums when he spoke of his talents as a public man; but he censured severely his moral character, his ostentatious tastes, and never associated himself with any of his shameful speculations. Often a sort of debate, very animated, arose between them; and though Danton always treated the matter lightly, and affected to laugh at the sermons of his colleague, Legendre never gave way, and one saw that the shafts which he launched had penetrated to the quick. In short, this remarkable man, so singularly organised, had inspired a kind of respect such that, in spite of the attachment which he loudly professed for Danton, Saint-Just did not dare to include him in the accusation levelled against the former. Though, even after the death of Danton, Legendre did not cease to defend him, he was never proscribed; and rose on the 9th of Thermidor to attack Robespierre, and contribute to his fall. He was thus an exception; and though one of the most enthusiastic members of the Convention, he escaped almost alone the

Digitized by Google

fate to which the fierce revolutionists of this terrible epoch had to submit. After the establishment of the constitution of the Year III. he was chosen a member of the Council of Ancients, and died in his bed at Paris at the beginning of the Year VI. (the end of 1797), being still a member of that assembly, and leaving no fortune behind him.

Camille Desmoulins was also one of those who were present tolerably often at the dinners of Deforgues. Ordinary in appearance, with no external advantages, Camille Desmoulins did not redeem by his conversation the wrongs which nature had done him. Sad and taciturn, he carried on his countenance the impress of a profound melancholy; and I cannot recognise in him the orator of the first days of the Revolution, in 1789,—the orator who, mounted on a chair at the Palais Royal, produced by his seductive speeches the grand popular movements of that famous epoch. When I saw him, shocked by the scenes of horror which met his eyes every day, he had attempted to bring back men's minds to more humane sentiments in several numbers of a journal entitled *Le Vieux Cordélier;* in which he dared (for at that time it was an act of the greatest courage) to advocate a return to clemency. Danton made merry with what he called a weakness; but Camille Desmoulins, excluded successively from the societies which claimed to be patriotic for having avowed his new principles, made no reply. His sadness announced that he already had a presentiment of the fate which awaited him; and the few words which he let fall had always for their object inquiries or observations with respect to the condemnations of the revolutionary tribunal, with respect to the kind of punishment inflicted on the condemned, and on the most noble and becoming method of preparing oneself to bear it. Included by Saint-Just in the accusation levelled against Danton and his party, though not even an apparent criminal connection (*liaison de complicité*) justified that strange confusion, he was brought before the revolutionary tribunal, astonished, as he said, to find himself associated with scoundrels; and after having made a reply, whimsical and impious, but characteristic of the time, to the question of the President, who asked him his age,* he perished on the scaffold on the same day as Danton.

It remains to speak of Robespierre. I only saw him, as I have already said, once. *Recherché* in his toilette, carefully curled and powdered, composed in manner, he presented the strongest contrast to the irregularity and affectation of slovenliness and coarseness which showed themselves in the dress and gestures of his colleagues. Grave in demeanour, he took scarcely any part in the conversation, except by a few sententious words. But in spite of the fixity of his pale and sinister countenance, one saw from time to time that he was ill at ease; and I learned afterwards that he was displeased with Deforgues for having brought him to meet men whom he pretended to consider already as dubious patriots, or, what was still more culpable in his eyes, as moderates. Thus the conversation during dinner was generally constrained.

* "Camille Desmoulins answered, 'I am of the age of the *sansculotte* Jesus, —thirty-three years.'"

Digitized by Google

I thought I saw, moreover, from the few words which Robespierre spoke, a desire to exhibit himself in his character of a statesman. He talked of the foreign relations of France, of the necessity of extending them, and of a renewed alliance with Switzerland. He had already made some inquiries on this subject at the ministry; and I recollect that it was not without a sort of alarm that M. Colchen, who was at the head of that division of the ministry which has to deal with the Swiss Confederation (*dont les Ligues Suisses font partie*), saw himself summoned to a conference at which Robespierre was present" (vol. i. pp. 42-48).

Danton and his party, the moderate section of the Mountain, aiming to check the excesses of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and to promote a return to legal order, fell before the fierce passions they had awakened but could not control. Danton was accused on the 1st and executed on the 4th of April 1794 (12th and 16th Germinal of the Year II.), and Deforgues was dragged down with him. In conformity with a decree of the former date, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became the Committee of Exterior Relations. Buchot, an illiterate schoolmaster, "whose ignorance, ignoble manners, and stupidity surpassed every thing," says Count Miot, "that one could imagine," was placed, and remained for five months, at its head. He was Robespierre's partisan and unshrinking tool, and owed his nomination to him. On the 8th Thermidor he denounced Miot and others as "moderates:" the fall of the tyrant on the 9th saved them. On the 8th of November 1794 (18th Brumaire of the Year III.) Miot became Commissioner of Exterior Relations; which office he held until February 7th, 1795 (9th Pluviose of the Year IV.), when he received the appointment of Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. He arrived at Florence 20th May 1795. The hostile feeling of the Tuscan people and authorities towards the French Republic, and the presence of French *émigrés* at Livorno, against which the French Government protested, but which Miot was disposed to sanction, made his task a delicate and difficult one. His conciliatory policy was, however, to a certain extent successful in moderating prejudices on both sides.

This period of Miot's life owes its chief interest to the fact that it brought him for the first time into connection with Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon, in March 1796, had married Josephine Beauharnais; and through the influence of *her* friend Barras, he obtained from the Directory in the following month the command of the army of Italy. His wonderful career had now fairly begun.* The Alps were crossed; two victories in

* He himself, according to Las Cases, dated the formation of his great political designs from the passage of the Bridge of Lodi.

Digitized by Google

Piedmont reduced Sardinia to terms; the other petty states of Italy soon followed this example. His successes in Lombardy showed Rome and Naples that to rely on Austria was to rest on a breaking reed; and they became anxious for peace. Miot saw that Bonaparte was following a policy of his own, without much regard to the views of the Directory, and found it necessary to come to some understanding with the general. He had already refused to obey orders from home to divide his troops with Kellerman, and to march with part of them on Rome and Naples; and the Directory had been obliged to yield. Milan was occupied by the French, the insurrection at Pavia had been subdued and the city sacked, the Venetian government had been frightened and entrapped into a treaty whereby they undertook to furnish the French army with supplies, the struggle was yet going on round Mantua, when Miot presented himself at Milan to confer with Napoleon on his Italian policy. This was in the beginning of June 1796. His impressions of Napoleon are thus given. They read like a description of some of his earlier portraits, and confirm, or are confirmed by them:

"I was strangely surprised at his appearance. Nothing was more unlike the idea which my imagination had formed to itself of him. I beheld, surrounded by a numerous staff, a man in stature below the middle size, and meagre in the extreme. His hair, which was powdered, and cut in a peculiar way squarely below the ears, fell over his shoulders. He was dressed in a straight coat, buttoned up high, and ornamented with a little embroidery of very scanty gold; he wore in his hat a tricolored feather. At first sight, his face did not seem to me handsome; but the strongly-marked features, an eye lively and searching, a gesture animated and abrupt, discovered an ardent spirit; and a large and anxious brow, a profound thinker. He made me take a seat near him, and we talked of Italy. His manner of speaking was curt, and at that time very incorrect,—*Son parler était bref et, en ce temps, très-incorrect*" (vol. i. p. 89).

Instead of *armistice*, Miot says he almost always used the word *amnesty*,—"*Il se servit du mot* amnistie, *et fit dans la toute conversation presque toujours cette faute*" (vol. i. p. 90 note). From one or two passages in these memoirs, we infer that Napoleon never became in speech a thorough Frenchman. In moments of excitement his French seems to have failed him. Miot mentions that, on receiving the oaths of the members of the legislative body, after the establishment of the empire,

"The Emperor delivered his speech with a firm voice, though with a certain degree of precipitation; and as it was the first time that he had spoken in public, one noticed several inaccuracies of language, some of which were intolerable; such, for example, as the addition of

Digitized by Google

the letter *t* to the third person singular of the future, and of an *s* to the first person. This mistake was particularly prominent in the last phrase of the speech" (vol. ii. p. 248).

Again, in 1808, when angrily haranguing the Spaniards at Vittoria, who were insensible to the advantage of having Joseph for king, he spoke, we are informed, "with great warmth, using now French, now Italian." This Miot conjectures was "in order to make himself more intelligible" (vol. iii. p. 18). If so, the expedient did not answer; for, he adds, "the greater part of his words was not understood." Those who could comprehend a mixture of French and Italian, would probably comprehend still more easily either language alone. It is probable that Napoleon, in his "violent irritation," was constrained to fall back on his native Italian. Such almost unconscious recurrence, when strongly moved, to a mother tongue, however long disused, is a phenomenon common enough. These are trivial details; but the slightest facts about Napoleon are interesting, and deserve to be gathered up. They help to complete our mental image of the man. So much has been written about him, that what is at once new and true can hardly be of any other than the microscopic kind.

Miot did not succeed in impressing his views of Italian policy on General Bonaparte. He urged the expulsion of the Austrians from Italy, the destruction of the temporal power of the Pope, and that the neutrality of the Tuscan soil should be respected. In the same month Livorno was occupied by French troops, and Bonaparte appeared in Florence, concluding shortly afterwards an armistice with the Pope. Bonaparte was not disinclined to the annihilation of the temporal sovereignty of the Holy See; and in the treaty of Tolentino, in 1797, made by the dismemberment of its territory a step towards that result, which but for the Directory he would probably have accomplished at once.* The treaty of Campo Formio, in the same year, gave Venice, with Istria and Dalmatia, to Austria; not without equivalent, it is true; but still the Austrians remained in Italy.

In November 1796, Miot received the appointment of minister at the Sardinian court. Before proceeding to Turin, he was sent on a special mission to Corsica. The English, with their partisans,—Paoli, Pozzo di Borgo, and others,—had just abandoned the island, which was again annexed to France. He was ordered to pursue a conciliatory policy, and to try and

* In September 1797 he wrote from Passeriano to Joseph, then ambassador at Rome: "Should the Pope die, you will do all you can to prevent his having a successor, and to bring on a revolution." *Confidential Correspondence of Napoleon with Joseph*, vol. i. p. 33.

Digitized by Google

unite its contending factions. From his own report of his measures, they were judicious, and answered their purpose. He now made acquaintance with Joseph Bonaparte, and became in later years his most intimate friend and confidant. The two quitted Corsica together, and betook themselves to Montebello, where Napoleon was residing with his wife, his mother, his brother Louis, his sister Pauline (afterwards Princess Borghese), and his uncle (afterwards Cardinal Fesch),—resting from his Italian triumphs. General Clarke, Duc de Feltre under the empire, had been associated with him in the negotiations with Austria then in hand. He was there, Napoleon said, as a matter of form; had no influence, and received no communications. "'He is,' added he, 'a spy whom the Directory has placed near me; and besides, Clarke has no talent, he is nothing but a haughty fool.'" Walking in the garden with Joseph and Miot, Napoleon thus unveiled his designs and his estimate of French republicanism:

"'What I have yet done,' he said to us, 'is nothing at all. I am only at the commencement of the career I am destined to run. Do you think that I triumph in Italy to aggrandise the advocates of the Directory, the Carnots and the Barras? Do you think, too, that it is to found a republic? What an idea! a republic of thirty millions of men! With our manners, our vices, where is the possibility of it? It is a chimera with which the French are infatuated, but which will pass away like so many others. What they want is glory, the satisfactions of vanity; but as to liberty, they understand nothing about it. . . . The nation needs a chief, a chief illustrious by glory, and not theories of government, phrases, the discourses of ideologues, about which the French understand nothing. Give them playthings (*des hochets*); that is sufficient for them. They will be amused, and will let themselves be led on, provided one dissembles as to the goal towards which they are made to march'" (vol. i. pp. 163, 164).

We will not say, on the strength of these remarks, that Napoleon understood the French character. They show only that he understood the *weak points* of the French character, and could play on them skilfully enough. If republicanism in France has always been short-lived, military despotism has not been, and, we venture to predict, is not destined to be, more durable.

In the conversation from which the preceding passage is taken, he announced his intention of never giving back Lombardy or Mantua to Austria, but of yielding to her Venice and a part of the territory of that city on the mainland. Miot and M. de Melzi (a Milanese nobleman, afterwards Duc de Lodi) crying out against this, as something like treachery to the peoples of Italy, whom he had professed to deliver from an oligarchical yoke,

Digitized by Google

"He answered, that we should not cry out before the harm was done. 'I shall not,' he replied, 'take such a course, unless I am compelled by some folly at Paris to make peace; for it is not my intention to have done so promptly with Austria. Peace is not to my interest. You see what I am, what my power is just now in Italy. If peace is made, I am no longer at the head of the army, which I have attached to myself. I must renounce this power, this lofty position to which I have raised myself, to go and pay court to the advocates at the Luxembourg. If I leave Italy, it shall only be to play in France a part something like that which I play here; and the moment has not yet arrived, the pear is not yet ripe. But the management of all this does not rest with me only. They are not at one in Paris. A party is raising its head in favour of the Bourbons; I will not contribute to its triumph. I intend some day to enfeeble the republican party; but I wish that it should be to my own profit, and not to that of the ancient dynasty. In the mean while it is necessary to march with the republican party. Then peace may be necessary to satisfy the desires of our boobies at Paris (*nos badauds de Paris*); and *if* it must be made, it is for me to make it. If I left the merit of it to another, this service would place him higher in the public opinion than all my victories'" (vol. i. p. 165).

These remarks exactly prefigure the future treaty of Campo Formio and the after-course of the speaker. Napoleon speaks of the royalist reaction at Paris. This looks like a prophecy of the 18th Fructidor; but through Barras and Hoche, and afterwards through Lavalette, whom he sent to Paris for the purpose, he was kept *au courant* with the royalist conspiracy against the Directory, which he despatched Angereau to crush. "Je veux bien, un jour, affaiblir le parti républicain; mais je veux que ce soit à mon profit, et non pas à celui de l'ancienne dynastie. En attendant, il faut marcher avec le parti républicain." Much as he hated the Jacobins, they were still necessary to him.

After a stay of about a week at Milan, Miot proceeded to Turin to enter on his duties as envoy. They were rendered difficult by the hatred in Sardinia towards every thing French, and by the conflicting views of the Directory and Bonaparte. The former aimed to revolutionise Piedmont, and fomented insurrections there; the latter gave his support to the Sardinian government in their measures of even too rigorous suppression. He feared the effect of popular disturbances on his new disposition of Italian affairs. Miot found the task of serving two masters as hard as it is reported to be. He seems to have done his best to discountenance the intrigues of revolutionary agitators, though unsuccessfully. In his perplexity, he made a second journey to Milan, to learn from his own mouth the wishes, and receive the instructions of Bonaparte, who he

Digitized by Google

saw would be master of the situation, and with whom he resolved to act. At his invitation, he, with Berthier, accompanied the General and Madame Bonaparte on a journey of pleasure to Lake Maggiore, riding in the same carriage with them.* With regard to Piedmont, he was advised to discountenance French intrigues, and to urge clemency on the Sardinian government; though it was foreseen that his exertions in this direction could hardly be other than fruitless. "The Directory," said Bonaparte, "is surrounded by a heap (*un tas*) of patriots and ideologues, who know nothing about politics. They will set Italy on fire, and cause us to be driven from it, one day." Miot promised to carry out his patron's views; but fearing this might compromise him with the Directory, dropped a hint as to a post in Germany, to which Bonaparte promised to help him. The course he took led to his recall towards the end of 1797. He was succeeded by M. Ginguene, an ideologue and patriot, honest but impracticable, of the true Directory stamp. Insurrections were fomented; and in June 1798 Turin was garrisoned by a French army. King Charles Emanuel escaped by night to the island of Sardinia,—all that was left him of his kingdom.

Bonaparte was, as he himself says, more a sovereign than a general in Italy. To diminish his authority, he was recalled to take the command of the army intended for the invasion of

* "Pendant la route," says Miot, "il était gai, animé; nous raconta plusieurs anecdotes de sa jeunesse, et nous dit qu'il venait d'avoir vingt-huit ans. Il montrait des soins très-empressés pour sa femme, et prenait fréquemment avec elle des libertés conjugales, qui ne laissaient pas que de nous embarrasser, Berthier et moi: mais ces manières libres étaient empreint d'un si vif sentiment d'affection et de tendresse pour cette femme aussi aimable que bonne, qu'on pouvait aisément les excuser" (vol. i. pp. 184, 185). In the *Confidential Correspondence of Napoleon and Joseph*, there is a curious letter, written by the former from Cairo (July 25th, 1798), which illustrates in another way his affection for Josephine. We extract the passage, together with the translator's note: "I recommend my interests to you. Your friendship is very dear to me. To become a misanthropist, I have only to lose it, and find that you betray me. That every different feeling towards the same person should be united in one heart is very painful. . . . . I am tired of human nature. I want solitude and isolation. Greatness fatigues me; feeling is dried up. At twenty-nine glory is become flat. I have exhausted every thing; I have no refuge but in pure selfishness." "The suspicions of Josephine's honour, hinted at in this remarkable letter," says the English translator, "disturbed Napoleon during the whole of his Egyptian campaign." [The letter was written at the beginning of it.] "Bourienne describes his distress and his plans of divorce six months afterwards, in consequence of some information from Junot. And on his return to Paris, on the 16th October 1799, he refused to see his wife for three days, and consented to a reconciliation only in consequence of Bourienne's representations that a conjugal quarrel might interfere with the ambitious plans which he was then meditating, and which he executed about three weeks later" (*Confid. Corresp.* vol. i. p. 63). Bonaparte's suspicions seem to have been unfounded; but the equivocal character of Josephine's relations with Barras before her marriage renders them not unnatural.

Digitized by Google

England.* When that project was abandoned, he was nominated as envoy at Rastadt. But the field which a war with Austria would afford his genius and ambition made the Directory,—who were anxious to avert hostilities,—reconsider and revoke their determination; and induced them to listen to his plan of an Egyptian expedition, which Monge had put into his head at Passeriano, while the treaty of Campo Formio was being negotiated.

Here Miot's memoirs diverge from the course of Bonaparte's career, and take us to Paris. The reaction from republican simplicity, he found, had already begun; though it had not yet made many steps, and showed itself rather in the desire *de gagner de l'argent*, which he says pervaded all classes, than in any return towards refined and luxurious tastes. He was successively employed in the Ministry of the Interior, and on a financial mission to the Batavian republic. He was in Holland when the Duke of York capitulated. At the Hague the news reached him of the events of the 18th and 19th Brumaire. All, however, was confused rumour until the arrival of a courier, who told him that his early friend General Berthier had been appointed Minister of War, and offered him the post of secretary-general in that department. This, his only item of distinct intelligence, was satisfactory; and Miot at once accepted the offer. At Paris he learned the nature of the government he had undertaken to serve, and the details of the *coup-d'état* which had established it. Bonaparte, he says, knowing his opinions, assured him of his firm resolution to respect public liberty. It was hardly worth Bonaparte's while to do so. When the constitution of the Year VIII. was established on the ruins of the Abbé Sieyes' scheme, Miot quitted the war-office, and became a member of the Tribunate,—the only body which had the right of discussing, as distinguished from merely decreeing, the new laws proposed by the First Consul; a privilege which Miot, an ardent friend to freedom, thinks it should have been content at first with *having*, rather than have been eager to *exercise*. Benjamin Constant was especially imprudent. Miot attempted to say a good word for him to the angry First Consul, representing Constant as a man worth the trouble of *managing*. "But he (Bonaparte) did not listen to me. 'I owe,' he repeated to me several times,—'I owe only the sword to my enemies.'" From this time Bonaparte, who had hitherto treated Miot with familiar kindness, became more and more distant and formal. The estrangement between Napoleon and his brother Lucien, who had been placed at the head of the Ministry of the Interior,

* M. Gallois, who had just returned from England, first convinced Bonaparte of the danger of a descent on this country. *Miot*, vol. i. p. 231 note.

Digitized by Google

dates from this period. A conspiracy, of which he and Bernadotte were said to be the chiefs, was rumoured. There is no evidence that the rumour was true, or that Napoleon believed it; though, at Fouché's instigation, he thought of removing Lucien from his bureau.

During Napoleon's Egyptian expedition, France had not maintained its ascendency in Europe. The campaign of 1799 had been unpropitious to her arms. Rome, it is true, had been revolutionised; and Pius VI. had died a captive in France. The Swiss were still obstinately fighting, however, against the "liberty, fraternity, and equality," which their neighbours enjoyed, and wished to extend to them. With Austrian aid, the French were forced back on the Rhine. The united forces of England, Austria, and Russia had achieved temporary successes in Lombardy and Naples. Before the next year was out, Napoleon at Marengo, and Moreau at Hohenlinden, had altered the state of affairs. Austria, deserted by the Russian Emperor Paul, ceded to France, by the treaty of Lunéville in 1801, Belgium and the German states on the left bank of the Rhine; and the French influence was restored with increase in Italy.

Before Napoleon set out to place himself at the head of his army in Italy, he endeavoured, in several conversations with Miot, to convince him of his attachment to constitutional liberty. "And, in fact," says that facile official, "he did almost persuade me (*Et en effet, il me persuadait presque*)." The chief of a government must rest his claims either on right of birth, right of conquest, or on constitutional right. "Birth has not lifted me to the position I occupy; I do not wish to seem to owe it to right of conquest; only a constitution, then, can secure it to me, and I am nothing if that which gives it me is not maintained." The fourth ground, of "the grace of God and the will of the people," had not then occurred to him. By dropping hints, "in a solemn tone," as to what might happen if he should die, he skilfully prepared the way for the adoption of the hereditary principle. The subject was discussed confidentially between Joseph Bonaparte (now councillor of state) and Miot. From Joseph, Miot learned that there had been a meeting at Sieyes' house of the members of the two legislative commissions, in which the question of providing a successor to Napoleon had been mooted. Moreau, Brune, and Carnot, had been named, with decided preference to the last. After Napoleon's brilliant achievements, however,—especially the news of Marengo,—men's minds, intoxicated with present triumphs, ceased for a time to concern themselves with future contingencies. The internal administration of France was as successful as her arms abroad. To confirm her prosperity, she needed

Digitized by Google

only, Miot says, a Washington, whom she was not likely to find in the chief who, long before he wrote the words, had "taken refuge in pure selfishness." The monarchical forms with which he surrounded himself at the Tuileries, and the favours he lavished on the army, showed at once the goal he aimed at, and the path by which he meant to reach it. He endeavoured to unite in the service of the state men of all shades of political opinions; a commendable policy, if it had had any other motive than his own security,—if he had offered them office from any other view than to enlist them by a bribe in the cause of his military despotism. He began to cultivate the favour of the priests, warmly denouncing "*ces méchants hérétiques d'Anglais.*" Things were set in train for an accommodation with the Pope.* He directly agitated the question of nominating a successor to himself, but affected to find difficulties in the way of making the succession hereditary. In the mean time the idea of a Bonapartist dynasty grew more and more familiar to men's minds; and his divorce from Josephine, and marriage with a foreign princess of Spain or of Germany, were discussed.

As a member of the Tribunate, Miot says he had been "rather opposed to than associated with the acts" of the government. He was not the less prepared to join it, however. On the 22d September 1800, he was told by Cambacèrés that the First Consul designed to nominate him a member of the Council of State, and wished to know whether the place would suit him. "The new functions which were offered me," says Miot, "being more in accordance with my tastes and habits than those which I quitted, I accepted with eagerness (*j'acceptai avec empressement*)." As councillor of state, Miot assisted to carry out the conciliatory policy towards the emigrants and royalist party which Napoleon about this time began to adopt. The First Consul saw that a nobility—if possible, an old nobility—would be the best guarantee of the dynasty he even now thought of founding. The conspiracy against his life, of which Ceracchi and Joseph Arena were the leaders, confirmed him in his distrust and dread of the Jacobins. A few days after its detection, October 20th, 1800, the propriety of reversing the anti-royalist proscriptions of 1793 was favourably discussed in the Council of State.

* In connection with Bonaparte's religious policy, Miot relates an anecdote which, though not very relevant, is amusing enough to be quoted: "I spent the evening of the 3d Thermidor at Bonaparte's house, where I found myself in the company of the celebrated Laplace. A tolerably long conversation arose between us three, but it turned more especially on matters of science than on any thing else. In the middle of the conversation, the First Consul, struck with an answer or an objection of Laplace's, turning towards him addressed (*apostropha*) him with vivacity: 'But, citizen Laplace, you are, then, an atheist'" (vol. i. p. 313). A novel discovery!

Digitized by Google

About this time an extraordinary communication was made by Joseph Bonaparte to Miot. The document referred to in it, if it was genuine, would do much to confirm Napoleon's policy of conciliation towards the Royalists; if, as is probable, it was a forgery, it at least indicated the line he had made up his mind to follow, through both straight and crooked paths. Miot gives Joseph's statement in the terms in which he wrote it down, on the very day on which it was made in confidence (*de confidence en confidence*) to him and Girardin:

"'It is about three months since,' he said to us, 'that the First Consul received from the Pretender (*du prétendant*)—Louis XVIII.—a letter, four pages long, written entirely by his own hand. It contains a kind of renunciation of the crown (*une espèce de rénonciation à la royauté*); but at the same time Bonaparte is invited to reflect whether, after having rendered such signal services to France, it would not be becoming his greatness, his generosity, his humanity even, to recall to the succession of the sovereign power the true heir of that ancient monarchy, and to confirm to him the place which the death of the actual chief of the government will leave vacant. For the rest, this same letter contains many eulogiums on our first magistrate; and announces besides that orders have been given to all the Royalists resident in France to remain quite tranquil, and neither to plan nor attempt any thing against the existing government.'

Joseph Bonaparte had seen the letter, but he had not it in his possession; I therefore did not see it myself. What I can affirm is, that if the falsity of this anecdote was proved, it must not be laid to the charge of our informant."

This last sentence means, we presume, that a letter, genuine or forged, of the kind described, was shown to Joseph; and that he believed it to be genuine. Later, when Napoleon offered to secure to Louis XVIII. a state in Italy on his renunciation, for himself and the Bourbons, of their claims on France, the offer was decisively rejected. Three months after the affair of Ceracchi, the First Consul's life was again attempted (December 24th) by the explosion of an infernal machine. His suspicions fell at once on the Jacobins. Further inquiries showed that the conspiracy was a royalist one. But in his resolution to destroy the Republicans and conciliate the *émigrés*, the former were punished; the latter, with one or two exceptions, were left unharmed. Miot was not destined long to remain in active service at Paris as councillor of state. On the 11th of January 1801, he was named Administrator-General of the Departments of Golo and Liamone, into which Corsica was divided, the constitution having been suspended in that island. He arrived at Ajaccio on the 31st of March, and took up his abode in the family mansion of the Bonapartes. The harsh government of

Digitized by Google

Salicetti,—he who had caused the arrest of Napoleon Bonaparte after the 9th Thermidor, as a partisan of Robespierre,—and the intrigues of returned *émigrés* and English emissaries, had given occasion to frequent insurrections. Escaped convicts had formed themselves into formidable troops of banditti: "One could not take a single step without an escort; and it was often necessary to send a detachment of from five to six men to carry a letter from one post to another." The dearness of provisions increased the popular discontent. The army, to whom long arrears of pay were due, was half-mutinous. Trial by jury had been found ill-adapted to Corsican habits and feelings. No one would incur the guilt of "abandoning his blood" by condemning a kinsman; and when the accused belonged to another party, the fear of the vengeance of his relatives had the same effect. Miot's administration seems to have been wise and beneficent; he was lenient to political offenders, but rigorous to the perpetrators of real crimes. He excited the anger, and had to contend with the opposition, of the Bonapartist family, who wished to make him the instrument of their aggrandisement; and in general found it difficult to hold himself aloof from the quarrels of rival clans. By the making of roads, and by public works in Ajaccio, he added to the material prosperity of the island.

While Miot occupied this post, three events occurred of political import to France and Europe. The first was the signing of the Treaty of Amiens; the second, the Concordat with the Pope; the third, the appeal to the people on the subject of conferring upon Napoleon the Consulate for life. Among the Corsicans there seems to have been but little enthusiasm for their great compatriot; and an unusually large proportion of negative votes was tendered both by the army and the inhabitants at large. One citizen of the department of Golo displayed at the same time his historical knowledge and his political foresight in the following extraordinary vote:

"Rome granted the consulship only for a single year. After Cromwell, the son of Charles I. succeeded, and took his revenge. Office for life is demanded to-day, to-morrow hereditary" (vol. ii. p. 23).

M. de Miot gives some amusing illustrations of the character and habits of his temporary subjects, who are now, according to the testimony of modern travellers, much what they were half a century ago. The state of industry and morality among the labouring classes is shown by the fact, that some of them, engaged in transporting the materials for the construction of a bridge at Borgnano, burned the wheels of their wagons to get possession of the iron of which they were partly composed, and then carried it off to the mountains and hid it there. This is

Digitized by Google

like the story of the South-American tribe whom the Jesuits endeavoured to civilise, but whom they could not break of the habit of consuming their seed-corn, or, when they were hungry, killing and roasting their ploughing oxen.

Questions arising out of the "peculiar institution" of the country, the Vendetta, seem to have been discussed in a very cool and business-like way:

"The degrees of relationship within which acts of vengeance ought to be exercised are regulated by ancient usages; and there are examples of discussions being raised on this point which have terminated amicably when, in the encounter between two individuals of hostile families, one has succeeded in proving to the other that he did not stand in the degree determined to be necessary to legitimate an act of vengeance. A singular respect for religious prejudices is united with the practice of this sanguinary code. The Prefect of Liamone, M. Galeazzini, told me a remarkable anecdote on this subject. An inhabitant of the village of Peri comes across the relation of one of his enemies engaged in working in his field. He thinks the occasion favourable for taking his revenge, and, as he cocks his gun, addresses the man, 'Come, say thy *In manus:* I must slay thee.' The other answers, 'No, I will not say it. Thou hast no right to slay me; I am not thy enemy.' And a discussion as to the degree of relationship ensues between them. At last the inhabitant of Peri, seeing that he could not make his man say his *In manus*, uncocks his gun and withdraws, preferring to lose the opportunity of satisfying his resentment to the commission of a mortal sin in killing a man who was not in the prescribed degree of relationship, and who had not said his prayers" (vol. ii. p. 37).

The Corsicans reverence a good shot:

"A man is informed that one of his sons has been killed in pursuance of a family feud. He betakes himself to the place, and recognises his son indeed. But in examining the body, he perceives that the three balls with which the musket had been loaded, and which have struck down the victim, have pierced the heart. Then every other feeling yields to the admiration which such rare skill excites, and he exclaims with enthusiasm, '*Ma vedete, che grand colpo,*—Only see, what a splendid shot!'" (vol. ii. p. 38.)

M. de Miot does not guarantee this story. On one occasion he endeavoured to arrest and punish a Vendetta murderer; but the relations on both sides thought it all right, and screened the man.

Miot quitted Corsica, of which, on the whole, he seems to have deserved well, in October 1802, having been rather suddenly recalled. Intrigues had been set on foot against him, and he feared an unfavourable reception from the First Consul, which he did not meet with. The Prince Pierre Napoleon, in the

Digitized by Google

correspondence we have referred to, says he left behind him "the odious memory of a spoiler and butcher." The First Consul mildly censured him for over-leniency. He resumed his duties as councillor of state in the section of the Interior.

He found Napoleon surrounded with all the forms of a monarchical court, and with the reality of despotic power. With Joseph Bonaparte he had many confidential conversations on the real designs of the First Consul. Joseph frankly confessed that it was the latter's jealousy of a rival that made him assume the unambitious part he affected to play. In the mean time, the Corsican voter's prophecy was being rapidly verified. The projects of Josephine's divorce, and of Napoleon's marriage with a Princess of Spain, Austria, or Russia, were matters of common talk. Coins were issued bearing the head and name of Napoleon, instead of the allegorical figure which had been used since 1792. This change, and others similar, gave occasion to a few epigrams; but to no more hostile comment, still less to any overt opposition. The dotation of the senate was the next step. After the sitting in which this measure was determined on, Joseph Bonaparte avowed himself finally disabused of all his republican illusions. There had been no assumption even of a feigned disinterestedness; "the most thorough republicans took a pencil to calculate what would fall to each in the apportionment of the common dividend."

The misunderstandings which began to show themselves between England and France shortly after the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens, arrested for a time Bonaparte's design of assuming the style, as he had already done the functions, of monarchy. His irritation against England manifested itself on the least suitable occasions. In the discussions as to changing the "image and superscription" of the French coins, he took the opportunity, *à propos* to nothing, of attacking every thing English,—even the poetry of Shakespeare and Milton,—whom Miot was naturally surprised to "see figuring in a debate in the Council of State." The attacks of the English press wounded him deeply. The controversy as to the cession of Malta, and the refusal of England to associate itself with him in a league of joint aggression and conquest, aggravated his bitterness. He seems to have persuaded himself that he was wronged. "It is quite the story of the wolf and the lamb," he said. We need not repeat the history of the negotiations and events which led to the declaration of war by England in May 1803. Both parties had refused to fulfil their treaty obligations, and each justified itself by the other's refusal. Napoleon's conduct towards the continental states had certainly shown quite a princely disregard of good faith. Switzerland, Holland,

Digitized by Google

Italy, gave alarming witness to his unscrupulous and illimitable ambition. While these events were going on, the First Consul was advancing with rapid and stealthy strides to the imperial throne. The names of his colleagues, the second and third consuls, were silently dropped from the state documents; a more punctilious and rigorous etiquette was established at the palace of St. Cloud; the well-known offer (which we have mentioned before) to Louis XVIII. was made and rejected. His chief hesitation was as to whether he should assume the title of King or of Emperor. The latter, he thought, implied less restriction, and he therefore was disposed to it. There were, however, family difficulties in the way of the adoption of the hereditary principle. Lucien's marriage with Madame Jubentou had quite estranged him from his brother; and the breach was not healed till Napoleon's return from Elba, twelve years afterwards. Even then their reconciliation was political rather than personal. Joseph had only daughters. Jerome's marriage with Miss Paterson was in Napoleon's eyes a complete mésalliance. Eventually the line of succession was determined in the family of the youngest brother, Louis, who had married Madame Bonaparte's daughter, Hortense Beauharnais, and whose son now reigns by "grace of God and the will of the French people." Joseph was eager to cut the knot of the difficulty by the expedient of Josephine's divorce and Napoleon's re-marriage. Lucien recommended Josephine to palm off a supposititious child on the French ruler and people. Miot reports the scarcely more creditable considerations which Joseph, in conversation, urged on his brother:

"'You hesitate,' I said to the First Consul; 'very well. What will be the result? Suppose this woman (Josephine) dies from some natural cause; you will be, in the eyes of France, of Europe, in mine, who know you well,—you will be her poisoner. Who will not believe that you have done that which it was so entirely your interest to do? It is the wiser course to prevent these shameful suspicions. You are not married; you have never been willing to allow a religious sanction to your union with this woman.* Give her up on political grounds, and don't let it be believed that you have got rid of her by a crime.'

'I saw,' continued Joseph, 'my brother grow pale at this picture; and this was his answer: 'You suggest to me what I should never have thought of, the possibility of a divorce. But to whom, on this supposition, ought I to look?' 'To a princess of Germany,' I replied, 'or to a sister of the Emperor of Russia. Dare only to take this step, and you change your position and ours, even though you should have no child. It alone will do every thing. The family system is established, and we become yours'" (vol. ii. pp. 113, 114).

* Napoleon had always refused Josephine's entreaties to consecrate their civil marriage by a religious ceremony.

Digitized by Google

This advice bore fruit in its season; but the time was not yet come. Family dissensions, and the increasingly uneasy state of relations between France and Russia, deferred yet a little the execution of the First Consul's designs. He was absorbed, moreover, in his preparations for a descent on England. Miot is inclined to think that he never seriously entertained the idea of an invasion;* and that he made use of it simply to occupy the minds of men, and to furnish a pretext for the collection of a large army. He imagined, according to Miot, that the removal of his forces from the eastern frontier of France might tempt Austria to attacks which would furnish a justification for a renewal of the continental war, and for his further aggrandisement at the expense of European states. This is a direct contradiction to the statements which Las Cases puts into the mouth of Napoleon. Both, however, may have their truth. He would, and he would not. The plans of politicians and generals are contingent, and involve several possibilities, all of which cannot be realised, but all of which must be prepared for.

Napoleon was not long in learning that his reliance on the good-will or passive acquiescence of the Bourbon party was a mistake. The detection of the plot of Georges Cadoudal, involving with many royalists the republican Generals Pichegru and Moreau, changed his feelings and conduct towards the former. He resolved to strike a blow at them which they should not easily forget. The illegal seizure and judicial murder of the Duc d'Enghien were the result. Miot disbelieves the story of Josephine's intercession on behalf of the unfortunate prince, though he allows it to be in harmony with her character. The interval between arrest and execution was too short, he says, to afford time for such a step. He acquits Napoleon of any share in the violent death of Pichegru, who was found strangled in prison in a manner hardly consistent with suicide.

"Joseph Bonaparte," he says, "who was with his brother when Savary came to announce the event to him, assured me that the First Consul seemed extremely disturbed, and spoke in a way sufficient to remove all idea of his participation in such a crime. Besides, the slightest reflection will easily convince any one that it could by no means contribute to the interest of the government to incite to it. The death of Pichegru removed from the procedure on which information was being taken one of the most essential witnesses, and an accomplice

* He reports the following from a conversation of Napoleon with Joseph: "Do you think yourself necessary during my absence? Well, what does it matter to me? I shall not go to England. I shall send Ney thither. Besides, I have another plan. I shall make an expedition to Ireland only; I will reduce the whole affair to an ordinary war; I will give back Ireland for Malta, and will make peace" (vol. i. p. 121 note).

Digitized by Google

whose confessions would have thrown the greatest light on the existence and character of the conspiracy of which the authors were being pursued" (vol. ii. p. 201).

This last reason cuts both ways. Pichegru's confessions would have thrown light also on the odious police system by which the conspirators had been inveigled and led on, and might have caused disclosures inconvenient to the government. All that can be said is, that if the murderer of the Duc d'Enghien and of Toussaint L'Ouverture had thought it to his interest to make away secretly with Pichegru, he would scarcely have hesitated at the guilt of so doing. For the rest, the matter must remain shrouded in the mystery which enveloped it from the first.

These events really furthered the projects of the First Consul. The French people, having passed through one revolution, were not eager for another, and saw with uneasiness that the stability of the existing order depended on a single life. The project of conferring hereditary empire on Napoleon was first mooted in the Senate in March 1804; in April, a public proposal to that effect was made in the Tribunate; on May 18th, he was declared Emperor of the French, subject to the popular ratification of the decree. The coronation took place on the 2d of December,—a day with which we have now other Bonapartist associations,—the most sweet voices of the people having declared themselves, by a majority of 3,574,898 votes over 2,569 in favour of the destruction of the last vestige of liberty. As usual, the French mind relieved itself by epigrams, of which Miot quotes some; we hope not the best.* The family dissensions which the choice of an heir-presumptive occasioned are related by him at some length. Every one knows the result, which, children failing to Napoleon, placed the succession in the line of Louis. The next step was to convert the Cisalpine Republic into a monarchy. The crown of Lombardy was offered to Joseph, but refused by him. It was then proposed to confer it on the eldest son of Louis, during whose minority Louis was to govern it. When that prince refused these terms,

* "L'indivisible citoyenne (the republic),
Qui ne devait jamais périr,
N'a pu supporter, sans mourir,
L'opération césarienne.

Grands parents de la république,
Grands raisonneurs en politique,—
Dont je partage la douleur,—
Venez assister en famille
Au grand convoi de votre fille,
Morte en couche d'un empereur."

"C'est une belle pièce, mais il y a *vingt scènes* (Vincennes) de trop."
"Le sénat, après sa séance, est venu à Saint-Cloud *ventre à terre*."

Digitized by Google

the emperor's rage knew no bounds. He seized him by the waist, and "hurled him with the greatest violence out of the room." On the 26th of May 1805, Napoleon was himself crowned at Milan king of Lombardy, the vice-royalty and actual administration of which were conferred on Eugène Beauharnais, Josephine's son.

While Napoleon was in Italy on the errand just indicated, Miot was discharging a special mission in Belgium. On the reëstablishment of the ministry of police, the territory of France had been divided into four departments, each under the control of a councillor of state, whose business it was to report to the Emperor on the state of opinion in the district assigned to him, and the character of the men who filled the several local offices,—to furnish him, in short, with what he called its "moral statistics and geography." Miot was placed over the provinces of the north, more particularly those on the left bank of the Rhine,—in which Belgium was comprised. The object of his mission, the repression of the contraband trade, at which the custom-house officials connived, failed. He had opportunity, however, of observing the peaceable and contented character of the inhabitants, too well accustomed to obey to care for a change of masters, and the flourishing industrial condition of the country. When he returned to Paris Napoleon was still in Italy, where he united to the empire the states of Piedmont and Genoa, Placentia and Parma, and, annihilating the Republic of Lucca, bestowed it on his sister, the Princess Eliza. These acts provoked the third war with Austria, and led to the treaty of St. Petersburg, stipulating offensive and defensive alliance between England and Russia, to which Austria and Sweden afterwards acceded. The history of the campaign which followed is contained in the words Ulm and Austerlitz, which more than counterbalanced the naval defeat at Trafalgar, which the *Moniteur* (as truthful then as now) did not think it worth while to mention. The treaty of Presburg, which concluded the war, left Napoleon at liberty to punish in his own way the alleged treachery of the court of Naples, which, after agreeing to a treaty of neutrality with France, was preparing, under Russian and English influence, to join the coalition against her. Joseph Bonaparte was sent out as the emperor's lieutenant-general to take the command of an invading army of 50,000 men, which Massena was collecting in Italy. He left Paris January 9, 1806. On the 27th Miot received orders to set out on the 30th for Joseph's head-quarters, and to place himself at his disposal for employment in the administration of the Neapolitan kingdom. Just before starting, he had an interview with Napoleon. He was instructed to inform

Digitized by Google

Joseph of the design of making him king of Naples. "I will call him Napoleon; he shall be my son," said the Emperor of his elder brother.

"'I recognise as kindred only those who serve me. It is not to the name of Bonaparte that my fortune is attached, it is to the name of Napoleon. With my fingers and my pen I beget children. I can only love, at my time of day, those whom I esteem. Joseph must forget all the bonds and relationships of childhood. Let him make himself respected. Let him acquire glory; let him break a leg in battle, then I shall respect him. Let him renounce his old ideas; let him no longer fear fatigue. It is only by despising it, and abandoning oneself to it, that one becomes something; and not in coursing hares at Morfontaine. Look at me, for example; the campaign which I have just finished, its stir and movement have made me fat. I believe that if all the kings of Europe formed a coalition against me, I should become ridiculously corpulent,—*je gagnerais une panse ridicule*' (vol. ii. p. 297).

'You have understood me,' the emperor added: 'I can no longer have relatives of mine in obscurity. Those who will not rise with me shall no longer be members of my family. I will make of it a family of kings, or rather of viceroys; for the king of Italy, the king of Naples, and others too, whom I do not name, shall all be connected with a federative system. I consent even to forget what two of my brothers have done in opposition to me: let Lucien abandon his wife, and I give him a sovereignty. As to Jerome, he has already in part repaired his injuries. After he has had a year's cruising,* I will marry him to a princess; but I will never permit Lucien's wife, a —— (*que la femme de Lucien, qu'une c . . .n*), to seat herself by my side'" (vol. ii. pp. 298, 299).

Napoleon, as this harangue shows, had now fairly begun that policy of surrounding the imperial throne with subordinate monarchies, which, while it aggrandised for a time himself and his family, proved in the end so fatal both to him and to it. He pursued this policy with the clearest knowledge of the dangers in which it involved him. He saw that a single great defeat would rouse against him the peoples over whom he had set his vassal-kings. But in the European war which his ambition precipitated, he needed recruiting-grounds for his troops and supplies for his treasury, which the resources of France alone would be insufficient to supply, and which must therefore be wrung from the nations he had subjugated.

Miot's memoirs from this point follow, as he himself did, the fortunes of Joseph Bonaparte. Their most important and interesting details have been in great part anticipated by the *Mémoires et Correspondance du Roi Joseph*, which were published in Paris more than four years ago, and from which the

* He was serving in the navy.

Digitized by Google

"Confidential Correspondence" we have before referred to has been selected and translated. They record the struggle of a purer nature and a weaker will with the selfish despotism of a powerful and domineering intellect, which nothing was suffered to resist. No thraldom could be more humiliating or painful than that of Joseph Bonaparte while he wore the crowns of Naples and Spain. His natural disposition and his personal ambition suggested to him a policy the opposite of that into which he was dragged by the designs and the exigencies of Napoleon. He was anxious to conciliate the people whom he ruled, by beneficent reforms, many of which in Naples he was able to carry out. The natural kindliness of his temper inclined him to such a course. He wished, moreover, by attaching his subjects to his person and rule, to free himself from his degrading dependence on the French Emperor, his generals and armies, and to become in reality a king. With this view, he surrounded himself with native troops, and selected his ministers from his own subjects, in preference to the French who accompanied him. He bore as lightly as he could upon them in the article of taxation. All this was in direct contradiction to the plans of the Emperor. To him Naples and Spain were provinces annexed by conquest to the French empire, which must expect the fate of the conquered. *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos*, was a principle of which he adopted only the latter half. He urges on Joseph the impropriety of his employing Neapolitan troops; and insists on the necessity of frequent military executions, confiscations, and pillage. Notwithstanding all this, Joseph managed to pursue to a considerable extent his own policy in Naples, with a success which justifies it. In Spain matters were otherwise. The Peninsular War placed him in the hands of his generals, who, though nominally under his orders, received their instructions really from the Emperor. Miot, who in Naples had held the office of minister of war, accompanied his master, from whom he received the title of count, to his new kingdom, as superintendent of his household. His last volume is little more than a history of the war in Spain. His advice to Joseph was steadily given, to relieve himself from the position of degrading servitude to the Emperor in which he was held, by resigning the crown of Spain. Joseph feared, however, that by so doing he should compromise the Spaniards who had adhered to him, and that such a step would be considered a proof of weakness. Moreover the mere title of king had its fascinations for him, and he was unwilling to abandon it.

After the battle of Vittoria, which enabled Wellington to reach the Pyrenees, and gave the finishing blow to the French

Digitized by Google

cause in Spain, Miot was sent by Joseph to inform the Emperor, then at Dresden, how matters stood. He did not discharge the commission. At Vitry he had an interview with Queen Julie (Joseph's wife), whose representations were not encouraging:

"She told me that the Emperor would take it very ill that the mission had not been confided to a soldier,—a professional man (*à un homme du métier*); that if I were received, I should be badly received and not listened to. 'The Emperor,' she said to me, 'is no longer such as you knew him of old; he no longer retains the memory of his early attachments; he insists that every thing shall bend before his will; he will not recognise you; no one approaches him now without trembling: besides, his position is, in fact, so difficult. The reverses of the last year have made so great a change. In the state of mind in which he is, you will not be able to invoke, in behalf of the success of your mission, an old connection, the memory of which will be just now rather painful than agreeable'" (vol. iii. pp. 288, 289).

Notwithstanding this, Miot resolved to discharge the duty intrusted to him. But as he quitted the queen a messenger arrived from the Duc de Feltre, announcing that the Emperor knew what had occurred in Spain, and bearing his orders to Joseph to quit the army and return to his estate at Morfontaine. Miot's commission, therefore, seemed to be virtually annulled; and at the urgent instance of the queen, though not without misgiving, he abandoned it. He accompanied Joseph to Morfontaine, where they arrived July 30th, 1813. Both were forbidden to enter Paris: an order which Miot obeyed; the king, however, could not resist the temptation of occasionally going in secret—to the play!—"*et quoique cette injonction ne fut pas très-rigoreusement observée par le roi que le désir de voir quelques représentations théâtrales attirait plusieurs fois dans la capitale, je m'y conformais, pour mon compte, sans regret*" (vol. iii. p. 294). Miot remained here, in complete ignorance of events, dividing his time between literature and country strolls; glad of a tranquil resting-place after the troubled scenes which he had witnessed, and in which he had borne an active though subordinate part. The police, however, heard of Joseph's visits to Paris, and, courteously enough, put a stop to them. Napoleon arrived at Paris a month after the disastrous defeat of Leipzig, and summoned Joseph to an interview at St. Cloud on the 28th November. He depicted to him the state of affairs, averred that he could scarcely hope now to preserve to France even her ancient limits, and required his resignation of the crown of Spain, with a view to the restoration of the Bourbons. Joseph hesitated. In the mean time the Austrians crossed the Rhine; the disaffection in Paris was obvious, and on the increase; the

Digitized by Google

imperial army was rapidly diminishing. Joseph yielded; and on the 9th of December disrobed himself of his "borrowed royalty," becoming once more only "the first subject of France," though with the honorary title of King Joseph.

On the 11th of December the treaty of Valencay replaced Ferdinand on his hereditary throne. In January 1814, Miot reëntered the Council of State. The enemy was now in the heart of France; the English had entered Bourdeaux, "where the mayor, M. Lynch, emboldened by their presence, had just proclaimed the Bourbons." Committing his wife and child to the care of the National Guard,—an appeal which excited a moment's enthusiasm,—the Emperor set out on the 25th of January for the army. Flushed with his brilliant temporary successes, he refused the terms of the allies; and the negotiations at Chatillon were broken off. The allies advanced to Paris. A letter came from Napoleon, ordering that the Empress and the King of Rome should on no account be allowed to fall into the enemies' hands. Miot strongly opposed their departure; their presence in Paris kept alive what little loyalty still remained there. He was, however, out-voted. He then urged that all the authorities who could act in the name of the state should accompany them, and that

"There should be left in the city only the magistrates invested with municipal functions, who could not in any case treat of more than the private interests of the inhabitants of Paris" (vol. iii. p. 349).

This proposal, like the other, was negatived. On the 30th of March the allied forces attacked the French positions about Paris. On the same day Queen Julie and her children left it. Miot had been requested by the king to accompany them, but he insisted on remaining to discharge his duties as a councillor of state. In the evening orders were received enjoining all the higher officials to join the Empress at Chartres, where Miot arrived on the 31st, "prostrated with bodily and mental fatigue:"

"The king, whom I found there, received me coldly enough; and this was the first occasion, during our long and intimate connection, that he showed himself ill-disposed towards me. He seemed to impute it to me as an injury that I had not set out in the morning, as he had proposed to me. I believe, however, that no valid objection could be made to the motives which had determined me to this refusal; but I shall not lay stress on this circumstance. In the situation in which we were, a change of temper was very excusable; and it was easy to find mutual grounds of complaint, without any more reason on one side than on the other."

On the 2d of April the Empress, with the wreck of the go-

Digitized by Google

vernment, removed to Blois. Miot thus describes the demeanour of the three crownless kings:

"The three brothers of the Emperor were, after the Empress, those who, by their position, ought to have had the greatest influence on affairs: it was Jerome who showed the most activity. The petulance natural to him made him little agreeable to the Empress, whom he offended by his *brusquerie*. King Joseph showed most calmness and dignity, though he felt more vividly than any one else the inextricable difficulties which surrounded him. As to King Louis, either from philosophy or from resignation, he held himself entirely aloof, and appeared occupied solely in the discharge of his religious duties during the Easter-week, in which we found ourselves" (vol. iii. pp. 357, 358).

Miot seems to have been the only councillor of state who was at Blois, and their little circle diminished every day.

No news arriving, Joseph set off on the 4th of April to join the Emperor at Fontainebleau. On the 7th came the tidings of Napoleon's abdication, with reservation of the rights of his son; and the counter-ultimatum of the allies, ceding him in perpetuity the island of Elba.

"I was witness then of the *dénouement* of this great tragedy; and with the secret horror which such a terrible lesson of fate inspired, there mingled in me a pity for the victims of this profound catastrophe, whom I had under my very eyes. I shed—I will confess it—bitter tears; and I put aside at this moment every bitter recollection, to sympathise with misfortunes so great, and to seek the means of alleviating their excess" (vol. iii. p. 362).

On the 11th of April the councillors of state gave in their adhesion to the new government, Miot with the rest; and signed the act to that effect, which appeared next day in the *Moniteur*. He was, however, excluded from the Council on the ground of his having followed the Empress to Blois. He purchased an estate near Saint-Maur-sur-Marne, and retired thither on the 18th July. But, to use his own words, he had not yet exhausted all the rigours of fate.

On the return from Elba, General Jamin, Miot's son-in-law, who had remained at the head of the horse-grenadiers of the old Imperial Guard, which Louis XVIII. had preserved, together with Miot's son and nephew, Jamin's aides-de-camp, joined Napoleon. Not to disconnect himself from them, Miot returned, though reluctantly, on the Emperor's nomination, to the Council of State. He was afterwards appointed "commissioner extraordinary of the government in the departments composing the 12th military division" (Vienne, the Deux Sèvres, Lower Charente, Vendée, and Lower Loire), with very large powers to displace and re-appoint civil magistrates and organise armed

Digitized by Google

forces. His last interview with the Emperor was to give a report of his mission. Except in the Vendée (of all places), the higher classes were, if not hostile, yet cold and indifferent; the lower classes rather Republican than Bonapartist, and inclined to the Emperor on the strength of his promises of free institutions. "But," he continued,

"I cannot conceal from you that almost every where you have in the women avowed enemies, and in France that class of adversaries is not to be despised. 'Oh, I know it,' he cried; 'I hear that on all sides. I never would admit women into cabinet secrets, and I never let them meddle with the government; and they take their revenge now.'

The conversation, during which, according to his custom, he had not ceased for a moment to walk up and down, dropped after this; and after a few minutes' silence, I was dismissed."

Miot seems to have had most trouble with the clergy. He could not get them to pray for the Emperor. At Nantes he had to effect a compromise:

"The grand-vicar of the bishopric, with whom I had an interview on this subject, confined himself to the fact that he had received no order from the bishop of the diocese. All he could do, he told me, was not to pray for Louis XVIII.; and he assured me that he would abstain. 'But,' he added, 'I will not pray for any body until I get orders from my superior.' I was obliged to be content with this jesuitical arrangement, and nothing more was said" (vol. iii. p. 392).

This incident reminds us of a story we have heard of a clergyman in one of our eastern dioceses, who went on praying for William IV. one or two Sundays after that monarch's death, and answered all remonstrances by saying that officially he knew nothing of it till his bishop should request him to make the necessary change in the service.

It is needless to speak of the events of the Hundred Days. On the 23d June, Miot heard that his son-in-law, General Jamin, had been killed fighting at the head of his troop, and that his son, then not twenty years of age, had been dangerously wounded. The young man died of his wounds in the December following. Miot declined Joseph Bonaparte's invitation to accompany him in his flight to America. His country-house was occupied in succession by French and Russian troops, the latter of whom the personal care of the Emperor Alexander restrained from all excess. But the expenses such guests entailed ruined Miot's slender fortune; and he was obliged to sell his estate, and take up his residence in Paris, where he lived in entire privacy devoted to literature.

"Being no longer," to quote the last sentence of his memoirs, "either eligible or elector, I remained quite outside of public affairs,

Digitized by Google

weary of the civil discords of my country, and occupied solely in literary labours, which procured me the honour of being named, in the year 1835, member of the Institute" (vol. iii. p. 415).

A note of the editor's informs us that, in 1825, Count Miot visited Joseph Bonaparte, then resident in America, where he was known as Count Survilliers, from the name of a former estate of his in France. He did his best to persuade the ex-king not to return to Europe, but his advice was ineffectual. The revolution of 1830 brought him back. He died in Florence, in 1844. With the exception of this American journey, General de Fleischmann tells us nothing of Count Miot himself after the date at which the memoirs terminate.

We have given but a faint and meagre outline of some of the contents of these volumes. They do not, perhaps, throw any very strong additional light on the public events which they relate, and the characters of the remarkable men whom they describe. The story has been so often told, from every point of view, and the motives of the actors so thoroughly sifted, that novelty could scarcely be looked for. Still the volumes, like all first-hand testimony, have their value. In historical matters, it is only out of the mouths of many witnesses that the truth can be established.

Art. VI.—FALSE MORALITY OF LADY NOVELISTS.

Mildred Vernon: a Tale of Parisian Life in the last days of the Monarchy. Colburn, 1848.

Léonie Vermont: a Scene of our Time. Bentley, 1849.

Kathie Brande. By Holme Lee. Smith and Elder, 1850.

Ruth: a Novel. By the Author of "Mary Barton." Chapman and Hall, 1853.

Framleigh Hall. Hurst and Blackett, 1858.

It is not easy to over-estimate the importance of novels, whether we regard the influence they exercise upon an age, or the indications they afford of its characteristic tendencies and features. They come, indeed, under the denomination of "light literature;" but this literature is effective by reason of its very lightness: it spreads, penetrates, and permeates, where weightier matter would lie merely on the outside of the mind—*rudis indi-*

Digitized by Google

gestaque moles. We are by no means sure that, with reference to the sphere and nature of the impressions they produce, prose works of fiction do not constitute precisely that branch of the intellectual activity of a nation which a far-seeing moralist would watch with the most vigilant concern, and supervise with the most anxious and unceasing care. The highest productions of genius, it is true,—great national epics or lyrics, works of pure reason that revolutionise a philosophy or found a school, histories that become classical and permanent,—the writings of the Shakespeares, Bacons, Descartes, Lessings, Dantes, Voltaires, and Goethes of all lands,—have unquestionably a wider and a grander range of operation, and leave more profound and enduring traces of their influence: but their effects are less immediate and less direct; they work deeper, but they work slower; they work upon the few first, and afterwards through these upon the many; they affect the present age probably much less, but future ages infinitely more.

There are many reasons why we should look upon novels in this serious point of view. They are the sole or the chief reading of numbers; and these numbers are mainly to be found among the rich and idle, whose wealth, leisure, and social position combine to give to their tastes and example an influence wholly out of proportion either to their mental activity or to their mental powers. They are the reading of most men in their idler and more impressionable hours, when the fatigued mind requires rest and recreation; when the brain, therefore, is comparatively passive; and when, the critical and combative faculties being laid to sleep, the pabulum offered is imbibed without being judged or sifted. They form, too, an unfortunately large proportion of the habitual reading of the young at the exact crisis of life when the spirit is at once most susceptible and most tenacious—

"Wax to receive, and marble to retain;"

when the memory is fresh, and has a greedy and by no means discriminating appetite; when the moral standard is for the most part fluctuating or unformed; when experience affords no criterion whereby to separate the true from the false in the delineations of life, and the degree of culture is as yet insufficient to distinguish the pure from the meretricious, the sound from the unsound, in taste; and when whatever keenly interests and deeply moves is accepted and laid to heart, without much questioning whether the emotion is genuine and virtuous, or whether the interest is not aroused by unsafe and unwarrantable means. Finally, novels constitute a principal part of the reading of women, who are always impressionable, in whom at all times

Digitized by Google

the emotional element is more awake and more powerful than the critical, whose feelings are more easily aroused and whose estimates are more easily influenced than ours, while at the same time the correctness of their feelings and the justice of their estimates are matters of the most special and preëminent concern.

There are peculiarities, again, in works of fiction which must always secure them a vast influence on all classes of societies and all sorts of minds. They are read without effort, and remembered without trouble. We have to chain down our attention to read other books with profit; these enchain our attention of themselves. Other books often leave no impression on the mind at all; these, for good or evil, for a while or for long, always produce *some* impression. Other books are effective only when digested and assimilated; novels either need no digestion, or rather present their matter to us in an already digested form. Histories, philosophies, political treatises, to a certain extent even first-class poetry, are solid and often tough food, which requires laborious and slow mastication. Novels are like soup or jelly; they may be drunk off at a draught or swallowed whole, certain of being easily and rapidly absorbed into the system.

A branch of literature which exercises an influence so considerable on men of leisure at all times, on men of business in their hours of relaxation, on the young of both sexes, and on the female sex at every age, assuredly demands the most thorough study and the closest censorship on the part of those who wish to comprehend, or who aspire to modify, the causes which mould humanity. We incline to think that a far larger number of persons receive the bias of their course and the complexion of their character from reading novels than from hearing sermons. We do not, indeed, hear of sudden conversions and entire and enduring changes of life and temper consequent on the perusal of romances, such as are occasionally said to follow the stirring eloquence of some great divine; though we believe that more analogous cases might be found than is usually supposed, were there any missionary enthusiasts to chronicle them, and were the recipients of the new spirit skilful and careful to trace back the healing influence to its source. But we are convinced that the instances are numerous beyond conception in which souls trembling and hesitating on the verge of good and evil have been determined towards the former by some scene of fiction falling in their way at the critical moment of their mental history; in which minds have been sustained in hours of weakness and strengthened in hours of temptation by lifelike pictures of sorrows endured and trials

Digitized by Google

surmounted in virtue of some great principle or some true sentiment; and in which sinners, fallen indeed, but not lost, have been induced to pause, to recoil, and to recover, by seeing in some work which they had opened only for amusement the hideousness of a crime whose revolting features they could not recognise except when reflected in a mirror. Numbers have first, not *learned* perhaps, but been actually brought to perceive and realise with practical result, the attractions of "whatsoever things are pure, holy, lovely, and of good report," by seeing their vivid delineations in the pages of "an owre true tale." Numbers who *might* no doubt have acquired their estimates of the relative gravity or excellence of favourite faults or difficult virtues from authorised Bibles or accredited moralists, have in reality learned them—often, alas, blended with a fearful degree of error—from fictitious histories; and seek their personal code of laws in Scott, or Bulwer, or Victor Hugo, or George Sand, or the Countess Hahn-Hahn, or Manzoni, in place of drawing it direct and pure from the Catechism or the Gospel. And far larger numbers still, as we may all of us be conscious from our own experience, owe it to the novels with which they occasionally refresh their wayworn spirits along the world's hot and dusty thoroughfare, that the perception of the beautiful, the enthusiasm for the grand, and all the finer sentiments and gentler and tenderer emotions which soften and embellish life, are not utterly dried up, or crusted over, or trodden out, amid the fatigues and conflicts and turmoil of this arid and weary existence.

There is yet another consideration which points in the same direction. Prose fiction furnishes not only the favourite reading of the young; it is also the line in which young writers most incline to try their powers. A few of the more enthusiastic make their first essay in verse, but the large majority prefer novels. These are easier, they require less sustained effort, and they are incomparably more certain of an audience. Again, women, as we have said above, are the chief readers of novels; they are also, of late at least, the chief writers of them. A great proportion of these authoresses too are *young* ladies. There are vast numbers of lady novelists, for much the same reason that there are vast numbers of sempstresses. Thousands of women have nothing to do, and yet are under the necessity of doing something. Every woman can handle a needle *tant bien que mal:* every unemployed woman, therefore, takes to sewing. Hundreds of educated ladies have nothing to do, and yet are tormented with a most natural desire, nay are often under a positive obligation, to do something. Every educated lady can handle a pen *tant bien que mal:* all such, therefore, take

Digitized by Google

to writing—and to novel-writing, both as the kind which requires the least special qualification and the least severe study, and also as the only kind which will sell. The number of youthful novelists, and of young-lady novelists, extant at this moment passes calculation, and was unparalleled at any former epoch. Indeed, the supply of the fiction market has mainly fallen into their hands; and it speaks well for the general taste and cultivation of the age, that, under such circumstances, so many of the new novels that pour forth weekly from the press should be really interesting and clever, and that so few should be utterly poor or bad. But it is in the nature of things impossible that productions of such a character, from such a source, however able or however captivating, should not be radically and inherently defective. The plot may be exciting, the style may be flowing, the sentiments may be pleasing and even stirring, and the characters may be natural, interesting, and well sustained; but the views of life and the judgments of conduct must be imperfect and superficial, and will often be thoroughly unsound. These things cannot be surely deduced, as is too often fancied, from certain fixed rules and principles which may be learned *à priori;* they depend in a great measure on observation and experience, on knowledge of the world and of the characters that move and act there, and on the ascertained consequences of actions and influences of qualities. Now here the young are necessarily wanting. If the writer be a young man, his experience of life must be brief, imperfect, and inadequate. If the writer be a young lady, her experience must be not only all this, but must be partial in addition. Whole spheres of observation, whole branches of character and conduct, are almost inevitably closed to her. Nay, even with respect to the one topic which forms the staple of most novels, and a main ingredient in all, viz. love, and its various phases, varieties, and developments,—her means of judgment and of delineation must be always scanty and generally superficial. She may have felt the passion, it is true; but she will have felt it only in one form,—the form congenial to her own nature;—she will be able, therefore, in all likelihood, to depict it only under one aspect, and will estimate its character and consequences from a personal point of view. She may possibly have enjoyed (or suffered) opportunities of observing the workings of the sentiment in some one of her friends; but its wilder issues and its fiercer crises are necessarily and righteously hidden from her sight. She may, by dint of that marvellous faculty of sympathy and intuition which is given to those who have felt profoundly and suffered long, be able to divine much which she cannot discover, and to conceive much which she

Digitized by Google

has never seen or heard; and the pure and God-given instincts which some women possess in so rare a measure may enable her to distinguish between the genuine and the false, the noble and the low;—but many of the saddest and deepest truths in the strange science of sexual affection are to her mysteriously and mercifully veiled; and the knowledge of them can only be purchased at such a fearful cost, that we cannot wish it otherwise. The inevitable consequence, however, is, that in treating of that science she labours under all the disadvantages of partial study and superficial insight. She is describing a country of which she knows only the more frequented and the safer roads, with a few of the sweeter scenes and the prettier by-paths and more picturesque *détours* which lie not far from the broad and beaten thoroughfares; while the rockier and loftier mountains, the more rugged tracks, the more sombre valleys, and the darker and more dangerous chasms, are never trodden by her feet and scarcely even dreamed of by her fancy.

In youth, moreover, and in the youth of women more especially, there is a degree of exaltation of mind and temper which —beautiful as it is, and deeply as we should grieve over its absence—partakes of, or at least has a strong tendency to degenerate into, the morbid and unsound. It may add to the interest of a tale, but it renders it unfaithful as a picture of life, unsafe as a guide to the judgment, and often noxious in its influence on the feelings. In short—and to sum up in a single sentence the gist of all that we have said—that branch of the literature of our day which exercises the widest and most penetrating influence on the age,—from which the young and the impressible (nearly all of us, in short, at one period or other) chiefly draw their notions of life, their canons of judgment, their habitual sentiments and feelings (so far as these are drawn from literature at all), and their impressions as to what is admirable and right and what is detestable and wrong,—is in the hands of writers whose experience of life is seldom wide and never deep, whose sympathies have not yet been chastened or corrected, whose philosophy is inevitably superficial, whose judgment cannot possibly be matured, and is not very likely to be sound. The result is, that we are constantly gazing on inaccurate pictures, constantly sympathising with artificial or reprehensible emotions, constantly admiring culpable conduct, constantly imbibing false morality.

It is chiefly with reference to this last point that we are moved at present to bear testimony. A large proportion of the novels we have recently perused appear to us to inculcate principles so essentially erroneous, and to hold up to admiration characters and actions so intrinsically culpable and mis-

Digitized by Google

taken, that we should consider ourselves wanting in the discharge of our duty as ethical critics if we neglected to enter our protest, and to record the grounds of our dissent. The unsound and immoral doctrines which we wish especially to signalise, may be classed under four heads:—false notions of honour; egotistical notions of self-sacrifice; sinful notions of compassion; and distorted notions of the relative enormity of various failings and offences. And we propose to draw our illustrations from tales, all of which are remarkable for merits of no trivial order, and are written with the best intentions.

Mildred Vernon is a novel of more than ordinary excellence. It is unusually well written; the characters are well sustained; the conversations are natural and lively; the plot is one of great interest and is skilfully developed; and although much of the society into which we are introduced is, both socially and politically, as bad as need be,—the scene being laid among the higher ranks in Paris towards the close of Louis Philippe's reign,—yet the tone and feeling of the book are good throughout, and the morality, while neither narrow nor severe, is on the whole pure, correct, and even high-minded. The life painted is corrupt and profligate to a startling degree; but the author steers perfectly clear of the too common and most heinous faults of exciting dangerous passions by delineating scenes of temptation and of sin, or of enlisting the special interest of the reader on behalf of the splendid or voluptuous sinner. But this prevalent healthiness of sentiment and *justesse d'esprit* throw into still stronger relief the false notions of honour which are described and inculcated in the main *dénouement* of the story.

Mildred Vernon is the beautiful, proud, pure, but somewhat puritanical and rigid wife of a baronet of strong passions, weak principles, ample wealth, and deep-rooted but not ostentatious selfishness. She loves him as an ordinary English wife loves an ordinary English husband,—that is, it was a love-match,—and she is most dutifully devoted to him in all points; but her deeper feelings have never been awakened, and she has no more notion that she could ever be tempted than that she could ever sin. Sir Edward brings her to Paris, finds access into one of the best circles of the Faubourg St. Germain, and establishes his wife therein; and then himself falls under the influence of one of the most fascinating and vicious of the *lionnes* who infested the higher ranks in that profligate capital at that most profligate epoch. He becomes utterly bewitched, and all his bad qualities are brought out by the corrupting and degrading connection. He neglects Mildred, insults her, out-

Digitized by Google

rages all her sensibility of feeling and all her ideas of virtue and decorum, unpardonably offends her dignity as a wife, and, as she is very strict and very proud, irretrievably alienates her affections. She had loved him for being what she had believed him; she now despises and dislikes him, because she sees him as he really is. During the whole of this period she is constantly with the Duchesse de Montévreux and her family. The son, Gaston de Montévreux, a cultivated and superior man, with all the French agreeable politeness and too much of the French laxity of morals, becomes ardently attached to her, sees her daily, and shields her as much as he can from a knowledge of her husband's misbehaviour. She, who is innocence itself, and cold not from nature but from habit and education, is for long wholly unconscious both of his devotion and of the degree in which her own feelings have become involved; but as soon as the truth flashes upon her, she acts as an English matron should and will. She has never the least notion of weakly yielding; but she perceives that her sentiments towards the young duke are such as ought not to be indulged, and that, deserted as she is by her husband, she would be more fitly and safely situated among her friends in England. Thither accordingly she returns,—learning too plainly from the separation that Gaston has now become all in all to her. After an interval of some months he follows her; circumstances bring about a mutual *éclaircissement;* she does not deceive him as to the state of her affections, but compels him to be generous and to respect her. His love and character become purified by the purity and elevation of hers; she reminds him of all he owes to his family and his country, and at length induces him to show himself worthy of a love of which neither need be ashamed, instead of hankering after one which could only be successful by becoming sinful, and to return to France, and seek in the noble duties and excitements of public life either strength to forget or patience to await. In consequence, contrary to all the principles and traditions of his family, who had hitherto held scrupulously aloof from the Orleans *régime*, he enters the Chamber, and becomes a distinguished senator and speaker.

Meanwhile Sir Edward Vernon is pursuing in Paris and at Baden a course of dissipation which is rapidly wasting his fortune and undermining his health, already shattered by a wound received in a disreputable duel. His wife's generosity, and the aid of her friends, rescue him from prison; but he declines to reunite their lives, and leaves her formally and finally. Mildred, who has returned to Paris in order to make her benevolent arrangements for Sir Edward, is now daily in Gaston's company: all that is innocent in their love is

Digitized by Google

gratified,—all that would be culpable and unworthy is banished, even in thought, far from them; and both, though in different measure, grow wiser, nobler, tenderer, and stronger, alike from the permitted happiness and the enforced control. All this is beautifully painted. But now comes the crisis of the story, and the occasion of the false morality. Gaston had been betrothed, as is customary in France, to a young cousin of his, Olympe, then only about fifteen and in a convent. He had scarcely seen her; he had no feeling for her: the affair was a contract, a plan, a family arrangement. She was very pretty and very rich. The idea of marrying her was of course, in Gaston's new circumstances and under his new and purer notions of morality, rendered simply impossible to him by his absorbing and resolute attachment to Lady Vernon; and on one pretext or another, all consideration of the affair had been postponed. Gaston waited for some occurrence or reason which should avowedly release him from his engagement. While matters were in this position, nearly the whole of Olympe's fortune was invested by a speculative guardian in the scrip of a railway, the bill for authorising which (the *concession*, as it is there called) was then passing through the Chamber. The success of this bill would double Olympe's dowry; the rejection of it would sweep it nearly all away. Gaston, wholly unconscious of this complication, carefully examines the railway project on its merits, decides against them, and makes so convincing a speech in the Chamber, that the *concession* is refused. (All this, be it said, is absurdly improbable in France at such a time. But let that pass.) That very day he had written to the mother of his cousin, to decline fulfilling his engagement with her; but Madame de Montévreux had intercepted and delayed the letter, and Olympe's ruin, caused by Gaston's speech, made it apparently *impossible* to send it now. The painful and difficult character of the dilemma is visible at a glance, especially when we add that, to complete it, and before the sacrifice is consummated, Sir Edward Vernon dies suddenly and as disreputably as he had lived, and leaves Mildred free.

The solution of a difficulty such as this is as good a test as could well be devised of the soundness of the moral philosophy of the author, and the principles and resolution of the actors involved. In this case, it is solved according to the radically immoral notions of "honour" prevalent in the highest ranks of most countries. Gaston at first is determined to be true to his instincts and his love; but his mother and the pious and holy confessor (the Abbé de Nangis) and poor Mildred,—whose somewhat *exalté* disinterestedness and generous concern for Gaston's reputation Madame de Montévreux is cruel enough to enlist

Digitized by Google

for her purposes,—all decide against him; and he yields. He marries his cousin, whom he does not love; and sacrifices Mildred, whom he does love, and whose devoted fondness he has gained by years of passionate promises and vows, and more recently by daily intercourse of the most intimate and confiding sort. And all parties concerned are regarded as having done not only what was right, but what was most eminently and sublimely virtuous. Now what are the motives which decide them, and the arguments to which Gaston yields? That "the world" will attribute Gaston's breaking off the match to the loss of Olympe's fortune, and that the irreproachable good fame and sacred "honour of an ancient and noble family" will be in consequence irreparably tarnished. "The Duc de Montévreux" will *be thought* to have acted meanly. It is true, the mother urges both to Mildred and to her son that Lady Vernon's reputation would be in danger of being compromised—(again the eyes of "the world,")—as she would be considered the cause of Gaston's having taken such a step; but this is only thrown in as a make-weight, and is clearly of little real influence, inasmuch as if the first explanation would be so sure of adoption by the censorious public, the second need not have been sought for. What, then, is the plain English of the whole? Gaston commits a *lacheté* and a crime to avoid *being thought* guilty of a baseness. He behaves cruelly to Mildred, lest the world should believe he has acted shabbily to Olympe. He breaks his faith, lest he should be supposed to have stained his honour. With his whole heart and soul bound up in one woman, he goes to the altar with another, and plights to her his exclusive devotion and his eternal tenderness. He prefers the reality to the appearance of doing wrong and acting falsely. A saintly priest blesses and applauds the hideous falsehood and the barbarous sacrifice; and all the four participators in this sin fancy they have risen to the very zenith of martyred virtue.

This error is the more to be deplored because, in one most touching episode in these volumes, the writer has instinctively seized upon the true moral view, where merely conventional thinkers would have missed it. The story of Madame de Boislambert is one of the most touching we ever read. Pure, noble, and tender, with all the mingled softness and intensity of feeling due to her Spanish and Moorish origin, and brought up by her mother in the doctrine that a promise, to whomsoever and under whatsoever circumstances given, is to be sacredly fulfilled, she in early youth yields her affections and plights her troth to a remarkable young man named Lionel Chavigny. He is *bourgeois;* and her family, therefore, would forbid the match

Digitized by Google

had they ever dreamed of its possibility, and had they not designed their daughter for the Marquis de Boislambert, a fine dignified general, but now in middle life. The poor girl consults her confessor, the Abbé de Nangis, who, finding how irrevocably her heart is fixed, at last consents to aid her so far as to persuade her mother to postpone the proposed marriage with the general for a year or two. Lionel is summoned to Spain: in about six months a report of his marriage, false, but so corroborated as to leave no room for question, reaches her; and in the revulsion of grief and despair, she consents to marry M. de Boislambert whenever her parents wish it. With him she enjoys seven years of such modified happiness as a heart so deeply wounded can obtain; for her husband, though somewhat formal, and too dignified to manifest the true and deep affection which he feels, is an excellent and noble friend, full of kindness and indulgence; and she has two sweet children, on whom she lavishes all the boundless tenderness of her nature. Suddenly Chavigny reappears; she learns the mistake which has lost her to him for ever, and sees how fearfully the bitterness of her supposed faithlessness has changed him. Her self-reproach is deep and dangerous: she mourns over and would fain redeem the moral ruin she has wrought. Lionel, whose knowledge of the world and cool consummate science make him one of the most formidable of men, takes advantage of her mood, and in a moment of wild and passing delirium she is lost. It was but a moment; the revulsion was immediate; her shame and grief were overwhelming. She leaves her husband's house, *alone;* for Chavigny declines to ruin her reputation as well as her peace by accepting the sacrifice she offers; but she will not deceive the husband she has betrayed, and refuses to return home. The story soon becomes known, and even in Paris excites deep regret and sympathy; for Louise is universally worshipped and beloved. Every one—even her husband—feels it impossible to attach the idea of *guilt* to the momentary frenzy of one so pure; and M. de Boislambert, when, after the lapse of a year, he has discovered her retreat, allows her to see her children, and, conquered by his own love and her deep contrition and intrinsic excellence, offers pardon and reconciliation. The scene which ensues is one of the most affecting in any work of fiction. The poor, afflicted, humbled wife, overcome by her husband's attachment and generosity, and yearning more than words can tell to be back with him and with her children, yet fears that she ought not to accept a forgiveness of which few could comprehend the grandeur or the beauty, and which, therefore, would expose him to ridicule and evil tongues. So far all is sound and genuine feeling. But now comes in that

Digitized by Google

fascinating notion of self-sacrifice, so fatal when perverted and *sentimental;* and Louise, feeling that she has "no right" to be so happy, determines that duty compels her to make all connected with her as unhappy as she can. Two considerations finally, after a fearful struggle, decide her to decline her husband's love, and to leave him for ever because she had left him for an hour. *First*, she says that she has "the sins of two souls upon her conscience," and her life must henceforth be devoted to an expiation for them both: so she becomes a *Sœur de Charité*, and deserts the duty of consoling and cheering the husband and the children whom God has given her, for that of consoling and cheering the miscellaneous poor whom she may find in hospitals! And *secondly*, she argues that she must not expose her husband to the ridicule which "the world" attaches to the husband who forgives; and, to clench the argument, when one of the most outrageous *lorettes* of Paris, in passing her, lets fall a remark about "improper persons," she turns to M. de Boislambert, and says (as if this practical proof admitted no rejoinder), "You see, Ferdinand, it *cannot* be!" If this be not deplorable weakness and distortion, our notions of right and wrong must be far astray.

Léonie Vermont is, like *Mildred Vernon*, a picture of love abandoned and happiness trampled under foot in obedience to misty and crooked notions of what honour and dignity enjoin. The Comte de Briancour, a legitimist noble of the true old incurable type, adopts and brings up with his own children the son and daughter of a comrade of inferior rank,—in fact, a sergeant of his regiment,—who had saved his life in battle. The brother and sister receive a good education, but grow up as different as it is possible to conceive. Philippe Vermont, who proves to have considerable talents as an artist, is a type of every thing that is mean and revolting in the French character. Ambitious, envious, treacherous, and malignant, without principles as without convictions, an admirer of sensual beauty and caring only for sensual enjoyment, he adopts republican views in their worst and lowest form, goes to the metropolis, and there leads a life of alternate political intrigue, profligate pleasure, and pictorial success. His sister Léonie—an ardent and enthusiastic republican; a true daughter of "the People," and believing above all things in the people's nobleness; grand, beautiful, and haughty, full of elevated sentiments and commanding courage,—reads her brother's character to its very depths, and distrusts, despises, and dislikes him. Ferdinand de Briancour, the only son of the count, is a young poet of honourable and refined sentiments, considerable ability, and

Digitized by Google

liberal though decidedly monarchical in his political opinions. Brought up with Léonie in the retirement of a country-house, he, as might be expected, falls in love with her; and she after a while returns his affection, with all the concentrated strength of her vigorous and unsophisticated nature. But she is too proud to dream of marrying Ferdinand without the count's consent, and the count's consent both the lovers well know will never be given to a *mésalliance*. So they resolve to love on, and wait patiently for better days. In the mean time the whole family go to Paris, and the Revolution of 1848 breaks out. Philippe Vermont, who has been a leading member of those secret societies where socialism was preached as a creed and assassination enjoined as a duty, and which so largely contributed to the fatal success of that most deplorable outbreak, becomes a great man, and is represented as holding the position actually assigned to Louis Blanc. He revels in all the joys of luxury and power; his selfishness, meanness, and the utter insincerity of all his ultra-liberal professions, become daily more manifest; and ever fresh instances of his profligacy unveil his character more and more to his disgusted connections. With the establishment of regular government his post is taken from him; he fails (while Ferdinand succeeds) in being elected a member of the Chamber, and sinks down into one of the most desperate and dishonest of the insurgent conspirators of June. The dreadful scenes of that three-days conflict are well described. Philippe is there, but in safety, and adds cowardice to his other vices. He is on the barricades at last; and when the gallant and saintly Archbishop of Paris appeared amid the combatants, cross in hand, towards the end of the third day, to prevent further bloodshed, Philippe's was supposed to be the hand which fired the fatal shot which slew that venerated prelate, whose death struck both parties with horror. Philippe escapes to England; but is burnt in effigy by the populace, and condemned *par contumace* by the authorities.

And now comes into play the paltry, distorted, fanciful morality which we denounce. As soon as this catastrophe and Philippe's reported share in it become known, Léonie, though heart-broken by the conviction, determines that her engagement with Ferdinand must be broken off; that their union thenceforth would be a crime in her and an infamy to him; and not only his saintly sister, Madame Isabelle, and the saintly priest, the Abbé de Lavergne, but Ferdinand himself, while wild with grief at the decision, at once accept it as obviously and indisputably inevitable. The marriage from that moment becomes in the eyes of all a guilty *impossibility*. The author's mind here seems to grow as muddy as those of her heroines and

Digitized by Google

heroes; and her development of this, the *dénouement* of her story, is singularly weak and inconclusive. Observe:—The engagement between Ferdinand and Léonie was entered into with the full knowledge on the part of both of Philippe's utter lowness and unworthiness of nature; neither of them dreamed that the brother's vice could tarnish or obscure the sister's inherent nobleness, or render her union with a high-minded and long-descended gentleman other than an equal and a righteous match; and both Madame Isabelle and the Abbé sanctioned and blessed the project. They subsequently discover that Philippe's seduction has ruined a poor girl in whom they were deeply interested, and that his desertion has driven her to suicide; but their pain and indignation lead to no ideas menacing their love. They learn that he is the leader of a band of secret conspirators, whose object is anarchy and pillage, and among whose means is murder; yet this even raises no barrier between the lovers. They know him to be infamous in every way and by every title; yet never dream that the infamy of the brother disgraces or implicates the sister, or makes her a thing whom an honourable man may not take to his bosom and cover with his name. But no sooner do they see him burnt in effigy amid the curses of the mob whom he had abandoned and misled,—no sooner do they learn that he (like so many other insurgents) has been condemned to the galleys *he had all along deserved*,—no sooner do they hear that his is said to have been the hand which slew the archbishop (though no evidence of the fact can be obtained, and though the tenor of the narrative implies that the fatal shot, if fired by him at all, was not designed for the martyred prelate, but for a personal antagonist with whom he was struggling in a mortal conflict),—than the mask falls from their eyes at once, and they perceive, as by a flash of lightning, that "a name" so infamous as that of Vermont can never mingle with a name so noble as that of Briancour! What hollow selfishness, what cruel pride, are here decked out in the rich plumes of "Honour!" What a poor and unreal passion comes in to claim the crown of martyrdom, and calls upon Religion to cast her halo round the shallow fallacy! For, of course, the abbé applauds, and even urges the self-sacrifice; and sends Léonie, with "upturned eyes" and broken heart, into a convent. Observe once more, (that we may tear away the veil completely from this *exalté* and high-sounding sophistry:)—Philippe Vernon has committed crimes and meannesses *worthy* of the galleys, yet Léonie, indignant and disgusted as she is, feels no dishonour recoiling upon her, nor does Ferdinand shrink from the sister on account of the brother's abject and alien nature; but as soon as he receives (though in his absence) the legal recompense of his deeds,

Digitized by Google

then all must be ended between them. He is already so infamous, that no condemnation, however public, can make him more so: his condemnation teaches *them* nothing new, but it proclaims all to the world; and herein lies the sting, the difference, the damning and deciding fact! Léonie renounces her affianced husband, and Ferdinand accepts the renunciation, not because Philippe *is* a cowardly and blood-stained ruffian, with whom the remotest connection is inherent shame, but because he has been discovered and denounced as such. And finally, to complete the distortion of view manifest throughout:—All the blood which Philippe has indirectly shed, all the ignorant assassins whose hands he has armed and whose fury he has whetted, raise no dividing cloud between Léonie and her betrothed; but in a civil conflict he *accidentally* slays an archbishop who is bearing the emblem of peace to the insurgents, he is believed to have undesignedly imbrued his hands in the blood of a venerated prelate;—and forthwith the avenging angel, who has connived at all the *lay* slaughter for which the same criminal is accountable, stands with his flaming sword between the innocent lovers, and drives them from their common paradise!

Once for all—on this subject of "self-sacrifice," we would exhort sentimental and ethical romance-writers to clear and purify their fantastic and flatulent morality, and substitute healthy strength for morbid and unnatural excitement. The power of surrendering and renouncing the dearest hopes and happiness of life at the clear command of DUTY, whether that duty be religious, political, or linked with the affections, is the divinest of human faculties, and its exercise affords the sublimest spectacle that can be witnessed on this earth; but to make this sacrifice to family pride, to the world's breath, to the wrong passions or the shallow prejudices of others, is a spurious and histrionic imitation. It is building an altar to a false god; it is endowing with your dearest wealth the shrine of a mistaken faith; it is enthroning and worshipping a weakness which, however amiable and unselfish, is a weakness still. And when, as in almost all these instances is the case, the sacrifice made involves the happiness of another person as well as our own, and entails, as usually happens, deception practised on a third, the deed becomes a wrong and a cruelty as well as a mistake. And considering the tendency, so prevalent among all moralists and most scrupulous and sincere minds, to imagine a course of conduct to be especially virtuous simply because it is especially difficult and painful; and the probability therefore that these heroic sacrifices of ourselves and others will generally be made in those moods of exaggerated generosity and feverish

Digitized by Google

enthusiasm which are always dangerous, often artificial, and almost inevitably transient,—it is especially incumbent on all who venture to paint such scenes and describe the feelings they excite, to beware lest they confound and misapply the fundamental principles of duty and of *justice*, and lead those who are guided by them to mistake idolatry for piety, and rush into misery at the dictate of an unsound and inflated sentiment when they fancy they are obeying the solemn voice of a divine decree. Frequent errors on this subject bring discredit on the grandest virtue possible to man. We ought to be able to admire not only the courage of social martyrs, but their wisdom likewise, and not be perpetually condemned to the demoralising task of lamenting that the power of acting right should be so often divorced from the faculty of seeing straight. That "diversity of gifts," which assigns strong sense and sagacity to one man, and purity and disinterested purpose to another; that apparent poverty of the moral nature, which seems as if it could not afford to endow the same person with excellence and talent, which makes the good so often feeble in intellect and the sensible so often frail in conscience,—is one of the gravest trials to our faith;—and novelists have done much to make it heavier still.

Kathie Brande is another tale of injudicious and unkind, because self-considering self-sacrifice. The story is one of uncommon beauty, full of exquisite and gentle sentiment simply and charmingly expressed, and distinguished by a sustained elevation wholly free from exaggeration. Kathie's mother is a widow, in narrow but not uncomfortable circumstances, with four or five children, of whom Kathie is the eldest and the most important. She is betrothed to a sensible and exemplary young curate, and they are to be married in the spring. But her only brother, Stephen, is an idle, selfish, and utterly ignoble creature, caring for nothing but his own pleasures, and careless of his family, of which he is the chief burden, instead of being its chief support. He has plenty of ability; but he has no sense of decency, duty, or affection; and he will not work. His mother strains her slender means to send him to the University; where he disgraces himself, incurs debts to the amount of more than a thousand pounds in two years, and ends by getting himself expelled. In addition to this, he is mean enough to sponge upon his sister, whom he has impoverished, to supply his own luxuries and fancies. His family, in place of letting him meet the penalty of his wickedness and cruel folly, and forcing him to support himself, submit to the greatest privations to satisfy his creditors, and allow him, without a

Digitized by Google

word of reproach or exhortation,—without even pointing out to him his obvious duty, which he does not even think of seeing, —to remain idly and expensively at home. Here was the first moral error: any one so selfish, insensible, and abject, could obviously be brought round only by the heavy pressure of personal suffering, and should have been forced to meet his own difficulties and atone for his own sins. But this was not all. In order to pay Stephen's debts and support Stephen's idleness, the small dowry which was to have enabled Kathie to marry Felix Mayne had to be surrendered, and the marriage had to be indefinitely postponed. Here was the second error—one more serious and patent than the first. This was not self-sacrifice alone; it was sacrificing the happiness of *another*, who ought to have been and was dearer than herself, to her own views of what was right and fitting. It was sacrificing a noble lover, whom she might have blessed, to a wretched brother whom her generosity could not redeem, but could only harden and confirm in his evil ways. Still, something might be said in defence of her disinterested error, for she was her brother's main stay; and when once the resolution to pay Stephen's debts had reduced them to poverty, her presence at home could scarcely have been dispensed with.

A few years pass on. Stephen, for whom so much had been endured and foregone, pursues a course of worthlessness ill-fitted to recompense those who had so loved and served him; Kathie grows thin and worn with toil, waiting, and soreness of heart; and Felix Mayne becomes soured and saddened by his loveless and solitary life. At last Kathie sees that it is wrong and selfish to retain a love which it may be years before she is able to reward, so she absolves Felix from his engagement. But Felix has become prosperous and famous. He refuses to be set free, declares he has enough for all, and urges her to bring her mother to live with them; for to this mother the family is now reduced. It is impossible to assign any sober or valid grounds for her refusal. But she *does* refuse: given over to this distorted notion of self-sacrifice, she is deaf to his entreaties, cruel to his enduring love, tells him that her mother could not bear dependence, sends him empty away; and then sinks back broken-hearted upon her desolate and darkened life. Now we do not say that a woman—and a noble and tender-hearted woman too—might not have acted thus; but we do say that the author ought to have represented this refusal as a deplorable error and not a sublime virtue, and to have pointed out how far the want of sound judgment detracted from the value of the noble impulse. The grander the moral faculty, the more important is it that it should be enlisted in a righteous cause.

Digitized by Google

Framleigh Hall is a novel of much interest and of many faults; but of great promise also. It is evidently the production of a lady, and of a young lady, who has read and thought more than she has seen or felt; but of whose powers, when they have been developed and enriched by the experience of life and a more wide and varied knowledge of the world, we are inclined to augur very highly. The characters are all distinctly conceived, and their individuality is preserved throughout the tale,—a sure sign of clear thought and careful workmanship. The writer is evidently worthy of guidance and of warning, and we feel certain will take neither ill; and therefore we have selected her romance as an example of wrong notions on a subject on which it is peculiarly important for women to have right ones. Her two heroines,—one singularly attractive, and the other singularly excellent,—set about committing a great sin under the delusion that they are obeying a solemn duty, and exercising a most virtuous and generous self-denial; and the authoress seems almost wholly unconscious what an ethical enormity she is holding up to admiration.

Grenville is a young man of good property and considerable talents, handsome and elegant in his person, and, when he pleases, agreeable in society; but without one single amiable or estimable quality. A tyrant at home and at school; cruel, passionate, and brutal while a child, and through all subsequent stages up to finished manhood; utterly selfish, and incapable of affection, tenderness, gratitude, or any generous and gentlemanly sentiment, though sometimes putting on an external varnish of good manners; rude and even ruffianly, not only to his schoolmates, but to his mother, his sister, and his betrothed, —he is about the most unredeemedly bad and detestable character ever drawn. Maurice Delamere is just the reverse of all this: of a delicate, nervous, and susceptible organisation, physically timid, though morally and conscientiously courageous; refined, cultivated, generous, and affectionate, but too irresolute to make his way in the world, and too shrinking and too conscious of his own defects ever to do himself justice in the eyes of others; not fitted to win the hearts of ordinary women, but sure to make any woman happy who could understand and appreciate him, and sure to be eternally grateful for such appreciation exactly because he felt it was what he could expect from few;—just the man also to be Grenville's victim; as accordingly he is, from infancy to death. Grenville has a sister, Isabella, in all respects his opposite,—somewhat sickly and not at all attractive, but a woman of strong principles and warm affections, thoroughly amiable, and attached even to her brother, though painfully and reluctantly conscious of his un-

Digitized by Google

worthiness, and long a sufferer from his hard and brutal selfishness. With her and her mother lives the heroine, Eugenia, a portionless cousin, beautiful, vivacious, uncultivated, and untamed; but with all a woman's best instincts native and unspoiled within her. While very young, and incapable of estimating character, she attracted the fancy of her cousin Grenville, who was charmed by her grace and beauty and longed for her as a plaything and an ornament; and, pleased with his attentions and ignorant of his vice, she thoughtlessly consented to engage herself to him. He entered the army, and was some time absent. Even when at home he paid her scarcely any attention, yet exacted from her the amplest devotion and incessant compliance with his whims. She had no real affection for him, and began to weary of his selfishness; but still continued to consider herself as pledged some day or other to become his wife. Meanwhile she met Maurice in society, and gradually grew intimate with him. His conversation and character opened a new world to her. She grew to be conscious of her want of culture, and to be anxious to supply the want. Maurice aided her; not only developed and aroused her dormant sensibilities of mind and spirit, but supplied from the riches of his own nature the pabulum needed by the newly-awakened want. There is no influence so profound or irresistible as that exercised over an intellectual woman by the man who first stirs that intellect into conscious life, and can lead it to the treasures which it longs to rifle, and guide it through the flowery and starry pathways which it yearns to tread. Eugenia—whose *heart* has never been touched—becomes unwittingly attached to Maurice; and Maurice, who is quite unaware of her engagement to his enemy and evil genius, loves her with intensest fervour. She soon becomes aware of this; and a visit which Grenville pays to his home, wherein he displays all the coarseness and violence of his bad and ungovernable nature, makes her feel forcibly the contrast of the two men, and determine that she can never give herself to so unbearable a master.

But Isabella, the suffering and affectionate sister of this domestic wretch, perceives the growing attachment; and aware how fatal it will be to her brother's hopes and happiness, sets resolutely to work to counteract it. She knows that her brother is wholly unworthy of a heart like Eugenia's; she is *dimly*, but refuses to be *clearly*, conscious that he will maltreat her and make her miserable; yet still she believes that the loss of his betrothed will not only disappoint him into fury, but drive him irretrievably into evil courses: for though as incapable of appreciating Eugenia as of deserving her, he undoubtedly loves

Digitized by Google

her with a passion which is compounded of artist admiration and animal desire. Accordingly Miss Grenville, though cognisant of the true and faithful mutual tenderness of Maurice and Eugenia, forgetting how sacred such affection is, determines to make these two wretched that she may make one man imperfectly and transiently happy, and to immolate two noble and loving hearts to the pleasure of gratifying and the hope of redeeming her bad brother. She will blight their lives and mar their souls rather than that he should lose his plaything and his sweetmeat. She persuades and almost compels Eugenia into the conspiracy against herself, by representing to her what she owes to Grenville's father, to her own youthful promise, and to the prospect of reclaiming the irreclaimable; and, strange to say, her cousin yields to these wretched arguments, and consents to abandon Maurice, whom she loves, and to marry Grenville, whom she dreads, despises, and is fast learning to abhor.

Now, according to our reading of the moral law, such conduct is foolishly and scandalously wicked; and no self-suffering involved in it can make it otherwise. To marry one man while loving and loved by another, is about the most grievous fault that a decent woman can commit. It is a sin against delicacy—against purity even—against justice, against kindness, against truth. It involves giving that to legal right which is guilty and shameful when given to any thing but reciprocal affection. It involves a double treachery and a double cruelty. It involves wounding the spirit, withering the heart, perhaps blighting the life and soiling the soul, of the one who is abandoned and betrayed. It involves the speedy disenchantment and the bitter disappointment of the one who is mocked by the shadow where he was promised the substance, and who grasps only the phantom of a soulless beauty, and the husk, the shell, the skeleton of a dead affection. It entails ceaseless deception, at home and abroad, by day and night, at our down-sitting and our uprising; deception in every relation,—deception in the tenderest and most out-speaking moments of existence. It makes the whole of life a weary, difficult, degrading, unrewarded lie. A right-minded woman could scarcely lay a deeper sin upon her soul, or one more certain to bring down a fearful expiation. For Woman, in very truth, this is the sin against the Holy Ghost,—the "sin unto death,"—the sin which casts a terrible darkness over both worlds. Yet here are two pure and virtuous maidens preparing and persuading to commit it out of mere disinterested tenderness; and a third describing the Suttee, and, with applauding gestures though with streaming eyes, encouraging the human sacrifice.

Digitized by Google

Novelists err grievously and habitually in their estimates of the relative culpability of certain sins, failings, and backslidings. It must be admitted that the church and the world too generally err as grievously, and in the same direction. Frailties, which often indicate nothing worse than too much tenderness and too little strength, are spoken of and treated with a cruel harshness which should be reserved for, and might fitly be lavished on, the bitter, selfish, or malignant passions. The grasping and cruel man is gravely rebuked; on the feeble and erring woman is poured forth a flood of virtuous indignation. The weak flesh is beaten with many stripes; the wicked spirit is gently told to go and sin no more. The tyrannical and selfish temper, that makes every one around it miserable, is blamed as an unamiable fault; the yielding folly, which can refuse nothing to one it loves, is denounced as an unpardonable sin. Provided a man is strictly honest, decorous in demeanour, and what we call "moral"—that is, not impure—in conduct, he is accepted by the novelist, he passes current in the world, he appears unrebuked before the altar;—though he be a tyrannical husband and a brutal father, though he be an abject flatterer, a cold hypocrite, or a haughty Pharisee; though he never hesitates for an instant either to gratify his own feelings or to trample on those of others. But provided a woman, however young, however ignorant in the world's ways, however desolate and sorely tried, has unloosed for one moment the girdle of her maiden innocence,—though the lapse may have been instantaneous, delirious, instantly repented and resolutely retrieved,—though in her essential nature she may still be all that is noble, affectionate, devoted, womanly, and unstained,—she is punished without discrimination as the most sunk of sinners; and, what is more especially to our present purpose, all writers of fiction represent her as acquiescing in the justice of the sentence.

Now we say unhesitatingly that these are not righteous, as most assuredly they are not Christian, judgments. Far be it from us to say one word calculated to render less strong, less lofty, less thorny, or less insurmountable, the barrier which protects female chastity in our land, or to palliate untruly that frailty which is always a deplorable weakness, and often a heinous sin. Its gravity cannot easily be overstated; and, God knows, the penalty exacted is always most terrifically adequate. But we do say that truth and justice are both violated by those writers who persist in representing sins of frailty *in all instances* as either inherently so grave in their consequences to happiness, or so surely indicative of lost or absent excellence,—and therefore calling for such fierce denunciation,—as those sins of malignant passion, selfish spirit, and bitter temper, which are

Digitized by Google

so usually accepted as natural, venial, and normal. The indulgence of the bad passions is surely worse than the indulgence of the soft ones; though it is guilty, because weak, in both cases. Yielding to temptation must be always sinful; but yielding to wishes not in themselves nor at all times wrong, cannot justly be condemned so sternly as yielding to passions inherently and invariably violent and criminal. In this direction, at least, lay the judgment and the sympathies of Jesus, as the whole tenor of his words and deeds proclaims; for while he denounced the hard and cruel rulers of the land, the grasping lawyer and the supercilious Pharisee, with an indignation that is refreshingly human, he comforted and pardoned the frail wife and the weeping Magdalen with a grave tenderness that is unmistakeably divine. He who spake as never man spake, he who saw what few other men could see, knew that, in the woman who has gone astray through the weakness of an ill-placed or thirsting affection, there might yet lie untouched depths of purity, self-devotion, and capacity for the loftiest virtue, which it would be vain to look for in the man whose cold and selfish bosom no tender or generous emotion had ever thawed, or in the man "who trusted in himself that he was righteous, and despised others."

These remarks have been suggested to us by the re-perusal of a most beautiful and touching tale, wherein the erroneous moral estimate we are signalising appears in a very mild form; and which, indeed, would appear to have been written with the design of modifying and correcting it, though the author's ideas were not quite clear or positive enough to enable her to carry out boldly or develop fully the conception she had formed. Mrs. Gaskell's novel of *Ruth* is too well known to lay us under the necessity of narrating the story in detail. Ruth, innocent and beautiful, left an orphan and without connections, is turned out of doors at sixteen by a harsh and hasty mistress, in whose establishment she had been placed to learn dress-making; and not knowing whither to turn in her despair, is persuaded by a gentleman, who had already half engaged her youthful fancy, to accept shelter and assistance from him. She goes astray, scarcely, if at all, knowing that she is doing wrong, but from a gentleness of nature that never dreams of resisting the influence or the persuasions of those she loves. After a while her lover deserts her; and the remarks and behaviour of the world, and the teachings of an excellent dissenting minister and his sister, awaken her to a perception of the error she has committed and the light in which that error is regarded. The process by which her character is purified and elevated, and her fault redeemed, through the influence of

Digitized by Google

Mr. Benson and her passionate attachment to her child, is described with a fidelity to the deeper and truer secrets of our nature which is as beautiful as it is unique. Among the members of Mr. Benson's congregation is a wealthy and influential merchant, Mr. Bradshaw,—the very distilled essence of a disagreeable Pharisee; ostentatious, patronising, self-confident, and self-worshipping; rigidly righteous according to his own notion, but in our eyes a heinous and habitual offender; a harsh and oppressive tyrant in his own family without perceiving it, or rather without admitting that his harshness and oppression is other than a sublime virtue, yet driving by it one child into rebellion and another into hypocrisy and crime, and arousing the angry passions of every one with whom he comes in contact; having no notion of what temptation is, either as a thing to be resisted or succumbed to, for the simple reason that all *his* temptations, which are those of pride, selfishness, and temper, are yielded to and defended as virtuous impulses; prone to trample, and ignorant of the very meaning of tenderness and mercy. This man, reeking with the sins Christ most abhorred, turns upon the unhappy Ruth (who, after six years of exemplary life, has become a governess in his house), as soon as he accidentally learns her history, with a brutal savage violence and a coarse unfeeling cruelty which we need not scruple to affirm constituted a far greater sin than poor Ruth had committed, or would have committed had her lapse from chastity been wilful and persistent instead of unconscious, transient, and bitterly and nobly atoned for. Something of this very conviction was evidently in Mrs. Gaskell's mind; and we can scarcely doubt that she placed Mr. Bradshaw's hard and aggressive Pharisaism in such strong relief and contrast by way of insinuating the comparative moral we have boldly stated. In any case, such is the resulting impression which must be left upon the reader's mind. But what we object to in her book is this: that the tone and language habitually adopted throughout, both by Ruth herself and by her friends when alluding to her fault, is at war with this impression and with the true tenor of the facts recorded. Mrs. Gaskell scarcely seems at one with herself in this matter. Anxious above all things to arouse a kinder feeling in the uncharitable and bitter world towards offenders of Ruth's sort, to show how thoughtless and almost unconscious such offences sometimes are, and how slightly, after all, they may affect real purity of nature and piety of spirit, and how truly they may be redeemed when treated with wisdom and with gentleness,—she has first imagined a character as pure, pious, and unselfish as poet ever fancied, and described a lapse from chastity as fault-

Digitized by Google

less as such a fault can be; and then, with damaging and unfaithful inconsistency, has given in to the world's estimate in such matters, by assuming that the sin committed was of so deep a dye that only a life of atoning and enduring penitence could wipe it out. If she designed to awaken the world's compassion for the ordinary class of betrayed and deserted Magdalenes, the circumstances of Ruth's error should not have been made so innocent, nor should Ruth herself have been painted as so perfect. If she intended to describe a saint (as she has done), she should not have held conventional and mysterious language about her as a grievous sinner.

We have more to say upon this subject, for it is a very wide and a very grave one; but our space is exhausted, and we have probably drawn as largely as is wise upon our readers' attention. But the faulty religion, which disfigures modern novels nearly as much as false morality, may perhaps tempt us to take up the subject once more on some other occasion.

Art. VII.—THE RELIGION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

Lectures and Addresses on Literary and Social Topics (chiefly addressed to Working Men). By the late Rev. Frederick W. Robertson, M.A., of Brighton. London: Smith and Elder, 1858.

English Hearts and English Hands, or the Railway and the Trenches. By the Author of "Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars." London: Nisbet, 1858.

The Pilgrim's Progress; with a Memoir of John Bunyan. New Edition. Griffin.

Chartism, and *Past and Present.* By Thomas Carlyle. New Edition. Chapman and Hall, 1858.

The Purgatory of Suicides: a Prison Rhyme, in Ten Books. By Thomas Cooper, the Chartist. New Edition. Holyoake and Co., 1858.

Blundering Theology: Plain Words addressed to Mr. Thomas Cooper; with Notes and Comments on his recent Lectures and Sermons in Newcastle. By George Lucas, 1858.

Confessions of Joseph Barker, a Convert from Christianity. Holyoake and Co., 1858.

There is no more seductive or apparently triumphant branch of modern philosophy than that which proposes, by virtue of careful study of the special conditions of character affecting a

Digitized by Google

nation, a class, or an individual, to *explain* at once the nature and growth of all religions. Religion, as we often hear, and perhaps quite as often think, is but a question of natural history after all. The harmonious and refined intellect of Greece gave birth to a religion of beauty and wisdom; the stern, reserved, justice-loving Roman had separate household gods for every separate home, while his loyalty, patriotism, and reverent obedience to his country's laws and institutions were, in the best days of the republic, the truest elements in the national faith; the German forsook the rude but tender and manly mythology of his race for the more pathetic and not less manly traditions of the Christian faith; the passionate and childlike nations of the south of Europe still cleave to Catholicism, with its picturesque universality and its intellectual authoritativeness; the more sober and logical nations of the North have thrown it off for a religion which will give their intellects more range, their conscience and will more freedom, and their love of rational system more play; the austere Scotch first embraced the most rigid form of Calvinism, and as civilisation softens them, allow it to shade gently away into the less rigid type of dogmatic Presbyterianism; the Irish, with no love of system in their intellects, and with a childlike disposition to accept passively the voice of any authority that can stir their imaginations, cling to an infallible church, or abandon it only for genial scepticism; and the English, sober-minded, but self-willed as ever, love a religion of compromise, when it is not arbitrarily imposed upon them, take many inconsistencies quietly, if they can find among them the practical help and assurance they need, and rest on the authority of the Bible, as at once broader, less tyrannical, and less irritating than any human infallibility which may take leave to explain itself, and more safe, tangible, and explicit than the reason and conscience of man.

Nor does this method of "explaining" the sources of all religions appeal only to the conditions of race, climate, and character as determining causes: it will assert boldly that the same scientific method can explain the predominant characteristics of all the faiths that belong to different stages of literary culture and different conditions of social life. For men of science, for instance, the mysteries of religion are to be pared down, and a little causal philosophy laid at the base of the system they accept; poets can only be attracted by the new world of sentiment and imagination that the divine love opens out; antiquarians are fascinated by the unique and venerable phenomena of Christian miracle and the records which attest it; while the toiling millions will welcome almost

Digitized by Google

any tradition which asserts for them a fuller spiritual equality with the enviable classes for whom they work, and indulges them with a dream of present help and future rest.

Thus does modern philosophy carefully draw attention to the human mouldings of different religions, whatever hypothesis it may adopt as to their truth; and few trains of speculation are, we think, read with greater eagerness, partly because the line of thought adopted is so comprehensive and wears so scientific an aspect, partly because it has so obvious a foundation in real facts of human experience. How far is it true, and how far false? Is religion indeed nothing but the wreath of vapour hanging over the human nature in which it originated, and still retaining shadowy traces of the shape and limits of the narrow vessel within which it was lately imprisoned? Is there no scientific trace of a formative influence exercised by a living God on man? or is all the testimony of experience confined to proving that men idly shape their own thoughts of God according to their own prejudices of nation, class, or personal feeling, without hearing any protest or experiencing any check from Him of whom they are thus forming idols in their own image? We believe the evidence of history, social life, and individual biography answers this question decisively in the negative; and, while sustaining all that is obviously true in the line of thought we have described, shows where it runs into pure falsehood.

It would be much nearer the truth, we believe, to say that the weakness, poverty, and defects of character which mark any nation, class, or individual are reflected, and even exaggerated, in the *scepticisms* and *superstitions* most characteristic of them; but that an antagonistic force, modifying, checking, often even temporarily subduing the results of such characteristic weakness and narrowness, is distinctly visible in their *most* characteristic religions. It is not, indeed, generally easy to distinguish that sort of scepticism which is a mere transitory intellectual discipline on the way to profound faith,—that sort of superstition which is a transitory imaginative suffering on the way to spiritual trust,—from those forms of scepticism and superstition which mark the relaxation and general decay of character. But in the case of those nations, at least, whose history is now run, and of individuals whose life is fully recorded, this is not impossible. Who can doubt, for instance, that the most characteristic narrowness and poverty and deficiency of the Greek national character was not fully reflected, but, on the contrary, if seen at all, was seen only in process of being counteracted, driven out, and compensated, in the noblest and most characteristic teachings of Greek religion,—in the

Digitized by Google

spiritual trust of Socrates and the ideal world of Plato? or, on the other hand, that the most characteristic poverty and defects of the same national character,—its love of change, its habit of verbal trifling, its conceit of taste and intellect,—were accurately imaged in the hollow systems of the stoical and sceptical teachers, who attempted to cover with webs of unreal thought the consciousness of national disease and languor in the later schools of Greece? Who, again, can doubt that just where the most characteristic Hebrew trust culminated, the Hebrew character lost its narrow national bigotry, its ferocity, its slavishness, its cramped sympathies; and passed over into the more catholic faith that was to supersede it,—we mean, of course, in Isaiah's prophecies of a glory that was awaiting Gentiles as well as Jews, Assyrians and Egyptians as well as Israelites? or that, on the other hand, the most characteristic marks of national narrowness and ferocity in that character were not only reflected, but exaggerated, in the horrible convulsion-fits of fierce superstition which preceded the extinction of the national life under the destroying army of Titus?

Or, to go to cases of individual biography, if we examine the characteristic influences of the profoundest faith of which we have record, they are certainly most visible in their working *against* the grain of natural defects and natural limitations of mind. Indeed, we doubt if there is any where a better distinctive test than this between the fanaticism that is prized and hugged because it has its root and nourishment in the selfishness of nature, and the faith that is prized because it gives the mind a relief from the galling pressure of its own predominant caprices and sins. Take such a history as that of St. Paul, for instance. We know that his mind was naturally fiery and dogmatic, disposed to put faith above hope, and both above charity. How these personal weaknesses were counteracted by the supernatural influences exercised over him, how much fuller of inspiration is his witness to the divine and universal charity which was not his by nature, than to the zeal which was, not only isolated passages of his writings, but the gradually softened and tranquillised tone of his letters as life drew on, abundantly show. And the same remark exactly may be made as to the tendency of true faith to enlarge the cast even of exclusive creeds and narrow intellectual grooves of thought. Nothing is more remarkable, for instance, than Luther's admissions, as his career came nearer to its close, that the preaching of his earlier days had unduly depreciated the moral side of religion, and had drawn far too sharp a line between "faith" and "the law." His mind, naturally ardent and mystic, had revolted vehemently against the yoke of a legal system, and

Digitized by Google

asserted that gospel of spiritual liberty so characteristic of the Germans. In exposing the rottenness of any *self*-reliance, he had forgotten that men as often lose their self-trust in the life of unconscious practical fidelity as in the conscious self-abandonment of the affections to the divine will. But he could not hold the faith he did without emancipating himself in great measure from this groove of characteristic German orthodoxy. "The law," which he fought against so bitterly in his youth, he lived to love, and declare that it was the hardest possible, indeed a wholly impossible, task to distinguish from "the gospel." In the Roman and the English church, again, we have many instances of minds essentially sober, and even legal, which never exhibit any tendency to enthusiasm in any other region of thought or feeling, domestic, poetic, or political, kindled, like Butler's and Hooker's, for instance, under the influence of what we must strictly term *supernatural* influence,—since it seems to work against the grain of nature,—into preaching a gospel of mystic love, with occasional gleams of vivid fire, by no means accordant with the general tone and well-marked type of their characteristic temperament.

We have intended to indicate in these preliminary remarks the true limits of the principle by which different types of faith may be really classified according to what is termed their Natural History. Nothing is more thoroughly atheistic than the affectation of modern philosophy to classify the workings of an influence which does not proceed from human nature, and which ever stems the current of human weakness, though using the higher gifts of man as its appropriate organ, according to the laws of human character alone. True faith takes hold of man with a strength partly in proportion to that in him which is strong, partly in proportion to its power of delivering him from besetting frailties and sins. And in briefly criticising, as we intend, the Religion of the Working Classes, we believe that the principle we have explained will be clearly brought out; that it will be seen that the aspects of religious truth which take the strongest grasp of their minds usually appeal either to the strong elements of character which their special discipline tends to foster, or else tend to counteract the grave spiritual and moral defects which their lot also tends to foster. On the other hand, we believe that the types of scepticism or superstition,—wherever these are not stages of transient development, but deep and final,—to which the working classes are most prone, tend to undermine their characteristic strength, and to exaggerate their characteristic weakness.

The volume whose title we have placed first in the list at

Digitized by Google

the head of this article opens out naturally enough the subject of working men's characteristic faith and doubts. It consists almost entirely of addresses delivered by a man whose mind had been the battle-field of faith and doubt on almost every point which can stir deeply a well-trained and refined intellect, to men of the working classes, whose ruder, but not less real, mental conflicts in the same field he earnestly sought to understand and help onwards to the right issue. It is impossible to read Mr. Robertson's lectures without noting afresh how any true faith assimilates the moral sympathies of the most widely separated classes of society; and yet how different is the form in which either truth or error will fascinate minds disciplined chiefly by physical labour and hardship, on the one hand, or by the most subtle intellectual influences, the trials of a sensitive nature, and, we may add in this case, the painful but exciting discipline of universal admiration, on the other. Mr. Robertson clearly felt these differences strongly. To his mind the supernatural seemed the one reality alone capable of steeling him against the insidious social influences which find so many avenues to a sensitive nature and a subtle intellect; in theirs the supernatural fascinated in the first instance, by opening so many new approaches to their heart and intellect, likely rather to fortify than to sap their inward strength. The faith which was as a rock to him, was as running water to them. Hence, though it seemed his main difficulty, arose the really powerful attraction he exercised over them. His thoughts struck chords hitherto silent in their natures, and so had upon them more of a supernatural than a natural influence,—an influence which he could never have exerted had he striven to answer their doubts from their own platform.

There is not, and never was, any class of society in which the sense of a supernatural world, and the need of a supernatural faith, is so vivid as the so-called working class, directly they have risen in any degree above the pressure of animal want. That this class was the first depositary of the Christian faith among the Hebrews, that it furnished the earliest and most remarkable converts among the Romans and Gauls, that it was almost the first class to be thoroughly possessed by the freer faith of the Puritan reformation in England, is mere matter of history. And the reason no doubt is, that the condition of the life of daily labour, on the one hand, excludes the consideration of the intellectual complexities which all infinite mysteries present when they are contemplated from the intellectual side; and, on the other hand, isolates and concentrates in one bright focal point the moral problems which surround the free but tempted will of man. The uncultured labourer will

Digitized by Google

not appreciate the various subtle questions of philosophical theory, of historic evidence, of theological controversy, which rise up in crowds as every fresh intellectual capacity approaches the limits of its natural field and gazes into the infinite world beyond. It will not trouble *him* to find out how an infinite and eternal being, to whom suspense is impossible, and whose will nothing can gainsay, can grieve over human sin, or plead with human infirmity. Moreover, the moral questions in which all the human yearning for a revelation arises are presented to him, not only with absolute simplicity, but with unusual force. The pursuits and enjoyments of this life are less capable of *seeming* a substitute for divine things than in the case of more cultivated classes. There is less that is spiritual about his secular tastes and occupations. The scholar, the trained thinker, or the artist, for instance, have aims which are at least half spiritual, even if not, as they may be, wholly so. There may be said to be a quasi-religion in all intellectual and refined tastes, which may partially lull, though it cannot ever assuage, the hunger of man after the supernatural; but this is not so with the class absorbed in physical toil. "My mate and I were working in a pit," said a railway navvy to the kindly authoress of a recent and very popular work,* "and says he, 'I wonder, Bill, whether it is true what they say of heaven being so happy—whether now it can be happier than sitting in the public over a good jug of ale, with a fiddle going?'" That is no doubt a real enough picture of the state of mind of many millions of the working classes. But this very fact,—seeing also that the conflicts of good and evil are as real, indeed more real, in their minds, which know nothing of that world of shams and shadows inevitably introduced with half-culture, and not dissipated even by the highest culture when purely intellectual, than in those a few social grades above them,—contributes to make the strife far more defined and intense. The sharp famine of a rough but vivid conscience, driven to choose between material appetites and the solicitations of a divine love, is far more favourable to the rapid growth of strong personal trust than any combination of circumstances by which the more cultivated classes are usually surrounded.

Indeed, we believe that the labouring class have a spiritual problem submitted to them which in its simplicity exactly resembles that arrived at by the very highest mind after it has passed successfully through all the various stages of intellectual perplexity and discipline;—we believe, in short, that such culture eventually issues in simply laying to rest the difficulties

* *English Hearts and English Hands*, p. 18.

Digitized by Google

which it has itself started, and so leaving the mind free to accept without distrust the primary spiritual convictions which a healthy conscience, untried by such difficulties, would itself impose. We do not of course mean that nothing is gained by the higher culture,—every thing is gained in the lesson so often repeated, that the spirit of man has no independent life, no true life at all, except as it is content to accept its dependence on the Spirit of God; but we do mean that the moral and spiritual problems of life will be solved, after the highest culture, on pretty much the same grounds on which they are solved by homely and untutored minds before that culture begins. Education chiefly consists in stirring up a host of intellectual capacities to assert their independence of conscience and faith; which, when better instructed, find that they have no authority to demur,—nay, that so far as they can decide at all, they will attain a fuller development by accepting than by denying the primary witness of the divine word within them. Only, the ascent to this final conclusion is steep and long, and there are many alternatives which may prevent its ever being reached. The poor labourer knows as much as the highest intellect of the meaning of sin, and self-denial, and evil motive; he feels the urgent need of help even more passionately; he recognises his own freedom to choose as clearly; he is as conscious of the strange contest within him: the awful fascination of a righteousness beckoning him to come,—the equally awful and deeply-rooted reluctance urging him to hang back,—all this he feels as strongly as the most cultivated mind, without being exposed to any of those perplexing hypotheses as to what it all really means,—those countless demonstrations of the delusive origin of such phenomena,—which blind the eyes of men in more advanced phases of intellectual life.

With the help, then, of this clue of thought, let us look at the effect produced by the consciousness of the supernatural on men disciplined chiefly by a life of labour; first in the results it produces when it only acts negatively and repulsively, next when it exerts over them the proper force of religion. We cannot keep too vividly before our minds that all inward appeals of God to the will of man,—being appeals of a great and constraining Power asking a self-surrender from free beings,—have something in them of repulsion as well as of fascination. They demand a submission of the will which is almost abhorrent to many of the currents of the natural life,—which will not only develop nature on one side, but counteract many of its tendencies on another; they solicit to lead the soul whither it both shrinks from going and desires to go; they make men feel that something fresh is to be introduced into, and some-

Digitized by Google

thing old cast out of, their lives; they make them shudder almost equally at the prospect of self-surrender and at the prospect of defiance. In either case the sense of the supernatural acts upon them with almost equal force: if they yield, there is, for a time at least, a renovation of the spiritual life; if they resist, there is a recoil of almost equal strength in the opposite direction. If this first conflict take place in a mind nearly uninstructed, so that no intellectual considerations can weigh in the struggle, and without the biasing influence of any sense of wrong or oppression from those higher social grades with whose teaching their first religious impressions may be associated, the recoil is perhaps strongest of all because it is a more distinct victory of evil than it can be if either entangling sophisms or human injustice have tended to produce it. Bunyan, whose noble imaginative work will be found to have greater and greater depth of meaning the more it is studied, has imaged this simplest and worst kind of recoil from the divine influence in the condition of those who go back to the City of Destruction and all its physical joys, repelled by that first sinking of the heart in the Slough of Despond which the renunciation of an animal life brings with it. The authoress of *English Hearts and English Hands* had almost exclusive experience of this sort of moral reaction. Her work lay amongst those who, as we have seen, were, in every thing but the strength of their conscience, pure children; and the conflict with them lay almost entirely between that "jug of ale and fiddle" heaven-on-earth, and implicit submission to the guidance of their kind but somewhat narrow-minded instructress, in which they found no stumbling-block. But of the characteristic impression produced by supernatural influences on their minds, even when those influences were set at defiance, there is most instructive record in her book. She tells us, for example, of one man who, after realising the alternative before him, returned to the service of "the jug of ale and fiddle," and steadily declined for a time to listen to her teachings again, on the express ground that "it don't do to live two lives." It is evident that this man had received a real impression from the Eternal will; and that, for the time having defied it, he was rushing from it with a precipitation he would never have shown had it not for a moment fascinated and overawed him.

But this simplest kind of religious alternative is scarcely that which represents the present state of our working classes. A vast number, no doubt, there are of the class described in the book to which we have referred, who furnish the workmen on railways, recruits to the army, and agricultural labourers; but the class which politically and socially excites at present

Digitized by Google

a more complex interest, under the name of the working class, is in a very different stage of culture. This is the class which furnishes the Methodists on the one hand, or the Socialists and Chartists on the other, of our large towns; which numbers chiefly *skilled* labourers in its ranks, which sends forth such men as Mr. Thomas Cooper, the author of *The Purgatory of Suicides*, and Mr. Joseph Barker, one of whose numerous writings we have placed at the head of this paper; a class full of active-minded politicians, as well as acute and ingenious thinkers, in whose minds the conflict between Naturalism and Supernaturalism is one of a much less simple character, and far more mixed up with both intellectual difficulties and social grievances than it is in the class hitherto described. With regard to this class it may be noticed, that what we have called the negative or repulsive influences of rejected religious faith fall into two practically distinct kinds. Of these the one we shall mention first was far more widely diffused in England in years gone by than it is at present, and far more widely diffused still in other countries than in England, but is still prevalent enough even here. It is that which we may call the political or socialistic reaction from Religion as something *humiliating* to man, hostile to unreserved assertions of absolute rights, closely identified with what are held to be oppressive institutions, and, in short, fundamentally unfavourable to the notion that it lies with men to make a clear sweep of existing order, and to substitute their own arrangements for equality and brotherhood as they may think best. The other phase of working-class Naturalism arises from the purely secularistic repugnance to Supernaturalism, and consists partly in a justifiable reaction from over-strained spiritualism, and partly in the intellectual force of rationalistic argument. But at the root of all there is no doubt that inherent shrinking back, which we have already noticed, from any surrender to the control of a higher Nature which threatens to restrict as well as to develop many of our energies, —to carry us whither we would not, as well as whither we would. It is obvious that these two phases of working-class Naturalism are very closely related, and shade off into each other by undistinguishable differences. Indeed, our classification is practical, and not intended to be logical; still, they are practically different enough to demand separate notice. We will speak of the political or socialistic recoil from Supernaturalism first.

Mr. Carlyle will have rendered no insignificant service to the present generation, if his writings only succeed in teaching us the very close connection between destructive politics and the infinite side of human nature. "The toiling millions of

Digitized by Google

mankind," he tells us, "in most vital need and passionate instinctive desire of Guidance, shall cast away False-Guidance, and hope, for an hour, that No-Guidance shall suffice them; but it can be for an hour only." Were there not in man an infinite craving for good, and infinite hatred of evil, the negative temporary solution of the question "religion or no-religion" would not so frequently involve as it does the positive solution of the corresponding questions, "Chartism or No-Chartism," "Socialism or No-Socialism." But, in fact, these questions are put and answered at the time of life when the profound sense of human evil and wrong first comes vividly upon the mind. The natural alternative then suggested to the spirit is this: "Is this evil really *in* human nature, and the great healing good outside human nature; or is the good in human nature, and the corrupting evil external to it?" If the first solution be adopted, all the force of the enthusiasm which at this period stirs in the mind will be spent on the quest after that supreme purifying Righteousness which is then seen to be close to the sources of the will; if the latter be adopted, and the external evil be referred, as it almost inevitably is, to the misarrangements of human institutions, all the moral force of the mind will be spent in a consuming fire of indignation against the "False-Guidance," and a desire for "No-Guidance,"—under the impression that this "No-Guidance" is synonymous with Self-Guidance, or the fraternity and equality it craves. The yearning for supernatural good is transferred from God to Humanity: the instinctive dread of supernatural influence takes the same channel; and the result is a fanaticism which is equally composed of a desire to see some grander and vaster manifestation of the common human life,—some upheaving of mighty human passions in the cause of liberty,—and an intense hatred to those repressive institutions to which are attributed the miseries and the moral evil of life, and which are seen to be the one visible hindrance in the way of such great upheavings of the "general heart of man." Revolution, Chartism, Socialism,—in short, insatiable Discontents of some sort, are thus the Danger-valves by which misdirected religious cravings, and that deep-rooted dread of religion which is so closely bound up with religious cravings, issue into external society. It is, in fact, what we may call the gospel of the "dangerous classes" which thus stirs working men who have rejected any other gospel. Mr. Carlyle's genius seems to have been devoted in great measure to its study; and in his *French Revolution* and *Chartism* it will be found vividly expounded. We have only to add to his exposition, that, besides blind infinite hatred of the evil that is gnawing at the root of human society, there seems to us to be

Digitized by Google

a distinct recoil from the Supernatural Will, which would seek to subdue that evil at the sources of the individual heart.

This kind of destructive creed is scarcely possible, in its intensity, to thoroughly cultivated men. However undue the importance which even the most cultivated will sometimes attach to some form of external institution or no-institution,—however visionary the creed of a St. Simon, an Owen, or a Fourier,—it is impossible for the bulk of men who have been once taught to read and think to conceal from themselves the lesson so broadly engraved on every period of history and every aspect of human life, that such evil as there is, is within us. Yet so long as it remains possible for man to hold before him this vivid belief that human nature is really within reach of sources of perfection, and is only infected by an evil of a visible and eradicable kind, there is, we believe, more chance of a *speedy* return to the true revelation of good than at a later stage of development. The ardour which is devoted to this crusade against corrupt institutions has still a genuine touch of supernaturalism in it. It is a fire in the breast which nothing but a true sense of what Good and Evil are could kindle. If personal submission be still refused to the Eternal Will that demands it, there is still, in the very virulence of the insurrection against evil, a lingering consciousness that a deadly personal conflict is going on in which unaided man is almost helpless. And not until that consciousness dies away without bringing with it any return to faith, do we feel that the final vision of truth is indefinitely postponed.

In the author of the Chartist poem whose title we have placed at the head of this article, we evidently have an example of that kind of temporary alienation from faith which is due to a keen perception of political and social evils. A Wesleyan preacher in his earlier days, Mr. Cooper seems to have been alienated by some social injustice from the religious body with which he was connected; and having first tested the unreal character of the religion with which he was best acquainted, and then having had bitter experience of all the miseries, physical and social, suffered in a period of distress by the class to which he belonged, he passed into a phase, not of active atheism, but of profound suspicion of all religious professions, and indeed of all privileged classes. Imprisoned for more than two years for vehement Chartist harangues, he composed the *Purgatory of Suicides*, the poem of which we have spoken, wherein he owns his passionate desire, but complete inability, to retain any belief in the faith "of Jesus;" and, for the rest, indulges in those visions of an enfranchised humanity, those invectives against

Digitized by Google

the cramping tyranny of our political institutions, natural to an ardent mind in vehement revolt against "False-Guidance," and consequently in temporary pursuit of "No-Guidance" for himself and his class. Later, again, this burning sense of social evil seems to have brought back his mind to the true sources of that evil, and the only healing spring. And if we may trust such reports as we can gain of his lectures, though his present convictions reproduce some of the narrower elements in his earlier creed, they have not shut his heart against those who shared with him the bitter days of his scepticism; on the contrary, his period of doubt has given depth, breadth, and charity to his convictions, as well as inspired a sober enthusiasm for the spread of his new faith. No one can read even Mr. Cooper's violent chartist poem without feeling that it expresses the burning dissatisfactions of a nature little likely to rest in mere institutional expedients for renovating society,—that it is the utterance of a proud mind, painfully conscious that the loud magnifying of human nature is a poor expedient for purifying it, and yet conscious too that Power there must be somewhere, by the aid of which such purification is not impossible; —in short, that the vehemence of his scepticism arose from that very deep sense of personal evil and good, which cannot long endure without either a conscious submission to, or defiance of, the living God. His scepticism was not of the deepest kind, for his conscious yearning for a spiritual deliverer certainly never passed away.

But the most influential leaders of negative thought among the working class of the present day belong to what we have termed the Secularistic, not the political type of Naturalism; and have been led into their present position in part through aversion to much of the unreal spiritual language of the day; in part through intellectual difficulties as to the existence of any independent moral freedom in man, and a consequent disposition to explain away and undervalue the class of emotions and affections to which it gives rise; in part through an impression that religious feeling disturbs, by the introduction of foreign excitements, the natural operation of human benevolence and justice. This is the kind of Naturalism advocated by Mr. Holyoake, and Mr. Joseph Barker, whose remarkable "Confessions" of his gradual conversion from Christianity we have placed among the works at the head of this paper. So far as this phase of scepticism is connected simply with the general atmosphere of intellectual doubts, which asserts its influence equally over all classes of society, it does not fall within our purpose to discuss it here. But there are, we believe, points about it which connect it especially with the character-

Digitized by Google

istic intellectual development of working-class intellect; and these it is essential to discuss.

It is remarkable, that the secularist leaders to whom we have alluded were each of them educated in one of the "straitest sects of our religion;" Mr. Barker, as he himself tells us, among the Methodists, Mr. Holyoake, we believe, among the Independents. Each of them evinces in his writings a sound, sincere, common-sense understanding, suited rather to the logic of external than of internal phenomena; and each of them was early indoctrinated with the highly-coloured and yet drily systematised orthodoxy which, so far as it is real, represents rather the special inward experience of high-wrought but uneducated minds in high-wrought eras, than the common judgments of all mature consciences in ordinary circumstances. Now that type of orthodoxy which is, we believe, the truest expression of the religious experience of half-developed intellects, when *suddenly awakened* to the conflict between sin and righteousness, is, we also believe, about the least suitable that can be conceived for regular didactic communication to the young, whose minds have not been, and cannot have been, so awakened. The Wesleys, with minds from the first keenly and exceptionally open to supernatural impressions, succeeded in bringing home those impressions with intense force to a generation of working men sunk in careless sensuality and sullen discontent with man and God. The fire thus kindled may be kindled again by the same means in the same class of minds. But nothing can be more dangerous than to inculcate on working men, as the legitimate standard of their experience, a code of feeling which took its first shape in the burning heat of a great spiritual convulsion, and which ought never to have been crystallised into dogma at all. Almost as well might successful political revolutionists enjoin on their children the duty of looking for a similar experience, though they had been brought up to reap the fruits of their fathers' warfare. Not, of course, that the parallel is exact; it is true that *every* man may expect a crisis when the conscience awakens us to a sense of personal unworthiness, and to the truth that all our deepest life depends on our absolute fidelity to a spirit that is not our own. But then, the whole value of this phase of experience depends on its being absolutely involuntary. If it is inculcated as necessary, as a "sign of grace," as a thing to be watched for and anticipated and *discounted*, so to speak, in the imagination,—to be cherished, fostered, made much of, and perhaps exaggerated,—the result will be that it will lose all its impressiveness the moment the temporary agitation has passed away. What made the Puritanism of the seventeenth century, and the Methodism

Digitized by Google

of the eighteenth, at once so impressive to those whom it impressed, and yet so destitute of result on the next generation? Mainly this, that the religious impression was in the first subjects of it involuntary, a real coming of God to them; whereas it no sooner became a *discipline* than the expectation of the catechumen was vastly exaggerated as to what he—who had led perhaps a totally different life, and on whom moral influences had descended gradually—*ought* to feel; and so many vehement efforts were made to make him feel it, that any thing like reliance on the genuineness of his impressions was sapped. Before the fiery experience which was described to him his fainter conviction of sin paled away; and when he came to look back on it in the past, he doubted whether it was any thing but the dim reflection of what he had been told to look for and desirous to feel. The high Puritan and Wesleyan orthodoxies are equally well adapted to produce revolutions of religious feeling among those who are sunk in conscious sin, and among those who have been straitly brought up under such orthodox influence.

Bunyan himself clearly felt that Naturalism, as opposed to Supernaturalism, was a far greater danger to half-taught minds brought up religiously, than to those which had been suddenly opened to the Divine influence. He gives indeed great, and certainly no undue, prominence to the fascination of naturalistic modes of thought, even on those of his own class who have themselves passed through the most ardent spiritual experience. He knew that a powerful reaction follows the period when the first clear sunshine of conviction falls upon the mind,—when the first bright glimpse of the spiritual world is won. He knew that even those who have fought their way through the first crisis of youthful doubt and trust, and who have attained what they think, in the moment of their enthusiasm, a clear vision of Him in whom they live, have still before them perhaps the greatest of their trials in the mere *subsidence* of that enthusiasm and excitement which has hitherto sustained them in the conflict. They descend suddenly from this ardent crisis of their lives into the routine of a world which never seems to recognise the sources of their trust. They see all things ordered on worldly rules, and only the vaguest tokens—if any tokens at all—of a life that is "hid with Christ in God." They feel the rush of worldly motives on themselves,—the ambition of success, the passion for gain, the jealousies of human affection, the dull pressure of business; and they cannot help asking themselves if they have not wakened from a dream,—if that sense of sin, and that surrender to God, and that brightness of spirit was not an effervescence of youthful feeling, an unreal successor to the unreal expectations

Digitized by Google

of childhood. This Bunyan felt, and accordingly, even after Christian had pursued his pilgrimage far along the narrow way; long after he had dropped his burden at the foot of the cross; after he had encountered and defeated Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation; after he had groped his painful way through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; after he had escaped from Doubting Castle and Giant Despair, and reached the Delectable Mountains, where the shepherds showed him through their perspective-glass the shining gate of the Celestial City,—even then he had to descend into the Valley of Vain Opinions, past the abode of "Human Reason, who bolted out of the Cave of Natural Speculation," to that Enchanted Ground where it was spiritual death to slumber for a moment, and whence Atheist, issuing with noisy laughter, warned him that all his labour was vain, the shepherds' perspective-glass an illusion, and the Eternal City a dream. And here, too, it is that, in the third part of his dream, "Tender Conscience" suffers his greatest peril; and here only that purely speculative opinions are represented as leading any one astray. In the earlier part of the pilgrimage moral obtuseness, obliquity, cowardice, and unfaithfulness, are the only suggested causes of defection; here it is that Bunyan places the chief intellectual snare.

But while he aids Christian and his other pilgrims to escape this peril, he introduces one striking episode, for the sake of which we have referred here to his great work. Sternly evangelical as Bunyan was, almost the only exception to the severity of his sentence on those who yield, against warning, to the temptations of the way is made in the case of this intellectual wanderer "Atheist;" and we could wish that modern theologians of the same school were near as tolerant. The history, too, which he assigns to this "Atheist" is remarkable, and was doubtless gathered from his own experience of the scepticism prevalent among his own order. He is the only example among all Bunyan's pilgrims of one who was *brought up under religious influence*. In the last part of the Dream, Atheist describes his own life thus:

"'Tis possible you have heard of one Atheist, that met Christian and Hopeful a little way off from this place, as they travelled to the Heavenly City. I am the man, though my name is now changed; nor was that my proper name, but was given me after my sleep on the Enchanted Ground; for my name before was Well-meaning, but now it is Convert. I was born in the Valley of Destruction, and *brought thence very young by my father:* but as we came along by that man behind us, even by Human Reason, I was so pleased with his discourse that my father could not get me along with him; but I must needs tarry awhile to converse with Human Reason, telling my father

Digitized by Google

that he being old and crazy, I should soon overtake him. But Human Reason had such enticing ways with him that I had not power to leave his company a great while: nay, at last, when he saw that I would go, he would needs accompany me to this place; and at parting he gave me something to drink out of a phial, which he told me was an excellent cephalic, and good against all the distempers of the brain, to which travellers are liable by reason of heats and colds, and the like; and so he took his leave and went back to his cave. But he was no sooner gone than I fell asleep on this ground, whether through the influence of that liquor he gave me, or through the nature of the vapours which arise out of the ground, I know not; but my sleep seemed very sweet unto me; and I believe I had slept my last here, had I not been used from my childhood to walk in my sleep; for getting up in my sleep, I walked back again the same way by which I came, till I was quite off the Enchanted Ground; and thus I met with Christian and Hopeful, who were going forward to Mount Sion. When they told where they were going, I fell a laughing heartily at them, calling them a hundred fools for taking upon them so tedious a journey, when they were like to have nothing for their pains but mere labour and travel.

Now all this while my brains were so stupefied with that liquor which Human Reason had made me drink, that I was not sensible I had been asleep, but was as one in a dream; and my fancy was so possessed with an imagination that I had been as far as any pilgrim could go, but could find no such place as the Heavenly Jerusalem, and therefore I believed there was none, and so I told them. But, however, they would not hearken to my foolish words, but went forward on their journey, and I kept on my course backward till I came to the town of Vanity, where I took up my lodging for a great while; till once upon a time, being at one of the public shows in the fair, I was struck with a thunderbolt from Heaven, which had almost cost me my life; for I was forced to keep my chamber a whole year upon it. Now in this time of my confinement I began to think of my former life, and the miserable condition I was in if it should please God to take me away: this made me weep day and night by myself; I also fasted and prayed, and humbled myself before the Lord in secret; and I vowed a vow unto God, that if it would please him to restore me to health again, I would undertake a pilgrimage to Mount Sion, on the first opportunity I could meet with to have company. God heard my prayer, my vow, and my tears, and restored me in a little time; and I waked and soon left that wicked town: and remembering that I had an acquaintance or two in the Cave of Reformation, men of sober dispositions and religious lives, I resolved to go and see them, if perhaps I might prevail upon them to go along with me."

Mr. Barker and Mr. Holyoake will smile when we say that the history of "Well-meaning," with his religious education, who turns Atheist through the fascinations exercised by Human Reason in the Cave of "Natural Speculation," and whom the heavy discipline of years restores to the belief that the rule

Digitized by Google

of a Supernatural Will alone makes life intelligible, is in this respect not unlike their own. Atheist, with his wild speech and his delirious laughter, talking in his sleep under the influence of Human Reason's opiate, could scarcely have talked more wildly than Mr. Barker in the following *Confessions:*

"For myself, though born of Methodist parents, and reared under Christian influences, and a Christian myself, and even a Christian minister, for many years, I have been brought, slowly and reluctantly, in spite of a world of prejudices, and in spite of interests and associations, and tastes all but almighty in their influence, to the conclusion that all the religions of the world are human fictions; that Theism is as foundationless and as irrational as Judaism or Christianity; that a personal God, the maker or even the governor of the world, and a future life of eternal blessedness for mankind, are great absurdities; that Atheism, or pure unmixed Naturalism, alone accords with what we know of the present state and the past history of the universe. That religion is natural to man, I believe; but not that it is more so than weakness and pain, ignorance and error. That man has a religious faculty, distinct from his wishes and his fears, his fancy and his folly, I do not believe. And while I believe that religion is natural to man in his ignorance and childhood, I believe that irreligion, Atheism, pure Naturalism, is natural to man in his intellectual and moral manhood. I say I have been brought to these conclusions in spite of a world of opposing influences. Nothing but evidence, almighty and irresistible evidence, besetting me continually, presenting itself at every turn, could so completely have changed my views, and reconciled me to my change of position in society. While a Christian, all that the world could promise or bestow seemed to be within my reach. Friends, popularity, wealth, power, fame, and visions of infinite usefulness to others and of unbounded happiness to myself in the future, were all promised me as the reward of continued devotion to the cause of God and Christianity. As the reward of heresy and infidelity, I had to encounter suspicion, desertion, hatred, reproach, persecution, want, grief of friends and kindred, anxious days and sleepless nights, and almost every extreme of mental anguish. Still, inquiry forced me into heresy further and further every year; and it has at length brought me to the extreme of infidelity. . . . . It is often said by Christians, that the reason why persons doubt the existence of God and a future life is, that they have good cause to dread them; or, as Grotius expresses it, that they live in such a way that it would be to their interest that there should be no God or future life. *This was not the case with me. My unbelief came upon me while I was diligently striving in all things to do God's will. My virtue outlived my faith.* The only reason why I do not believe in God and immortality is, that I can nowhere see any signs or proofs of them, but every where see proofs to the contrary. At the same time, I acknowledge that I should now be very sorry that there *should* be such a God as the God of the Jews or the Christians, or that there should be such an eternal future as orthodox Christianity

Digitized by Google

portrays. I did not *begin* by wishing there was no God and no future life; but I have ended by thinking it is infinitely better that there should not be any, than that there should be such monster masses of cruelty and horror as the God and future life of orthodox Christianity."

Mr. Barker's self-confidence is great, and not unworthy of "Human Reason's" teaching, if we may interpret Bunyan as meaning that that retired philosopher habitually applied principles derived from the study of objects beneath him to disprove the existence of things above. To us the world would seem indeed like a Bedlam if, as Mr. Barker thinks, it were inhabited by beings who attain strength, composure, and power to conquer, suffer, and forgive, by breathing forth delirious thoughts of trust and prayer into a hollow sphere of vacancy, and by quietly surrendering cherished wishes and resolves to a blind unrecognising fate. But we do not quote him to argue with him; but rather to illustrate the special type of the secularistic school of thought, and its self-confident ignoring of all influences it cannot clearly comprehend. It does not preach a destructive crusade against any imaginary incarnation of evil in the institutions of the universe, like the political atheism; nor does it indulge any fierce desire to see human nature free and absolute, and without even the constraint of a repressive faith; it consists rather in an intellectual rebellion against the intrusion of principles which are too high for the complete grasp of man's understanding into the themes he attempts to discuss. And this is, we believe, a state of mind very closely connected with the characteristic education of the Working Classes. That which renders religious influences of a powerful and even fanatical sort so fascinating to men educated mainly by physical toil, is not that they assimilate so well with their tone of thought, but that they afford so strong a contrast to it,—so powerful a moral stimulant amid the unrelieved monotony of labour that tasks the body but not the mind. As we have seen, the sort of spasmodic supernaturalism which is best fitted for this purpose is precisely that worst fitted to prepare any genuine mind for its reception; and hence in the second generation of a religious society of this kind there arise a class of minds better disciplined by sober and moral habits, and probably educated in a greater variety of secular branches of knowledge, and yet, on that very account, with greater resources of mental occupation at their command, less susceptible to "religious experience," and possessed of far more intellectual self-confidence.

Indeed, the kind and degree of education which working men of acute and vigorous intellects, who have early to live by their own toil, attain, is exactly that which of all others most

Digitized by Google

unfits the mind for taking any account at all of influences it cannot explain. They are seldom taught any thing which they cannot easily and entirely master; what they learn even at school in the way of reading, writing, and arithmetic, is rather the rudiments of art than of science; and they are daily accustomed to see the workmanship of their skill,—completed without difficulty or any effort of mind,—going forth to the world. Their *learning* soon passes into the stage of *knowledge*, and they are seldom taught to take any notice of what they cannot turn to use. Hence a habit of mind which ignores altogether influences not within its reach; as the child passes over with complete unconsciousness in its reading all that is very wide of its experience. Nothing can be more different from this than the prolonged culture of the school and the university through which the middle and higher classes pass; there the minds of the scholars are almost always engaged in a continuous grappling with difficulties above them,—in learning to trace new thoughts, to define afresh the wide circle of their ignorance, to recognise energies and beauties that they cannot analyse, and to accept on authority knowledge of which they cannot see the evidence for a long course of years. The consequence is, that while the mind of the intelligent working man acquires the habit of regarding attentively only what is within its reach and even its grasp, the mind of the cultivated thinker habitually contemplates also the sphere of its ignorance, only noting accurately any new points of light that promise to bring it within the sphere of thought, if not within that of comprehension. Now, as a habit of intellect, Naturalism of course simply signifies the tendency to ignore that which is not subject to admitted and intelligible laws; and the most cultivated scholar may be, as many are, disciples of Naturalism. But it is obvious that the habit of noting and willingly recognising the operation of unexplained influences on the mind, is far more *favourable* to the recognition of Divine Influences, if such there be, than the habit of ignoring them. Moreover, the humility of *thought* at least, which all such culture encourages, renders the learner more anxious to find the explanation of other men's experience, or at all events to recognise that such an explanation there may be, even though beyond its own reach.

Hence a complete difference in the type of the scepticism of working men and of more cultivated intellects. When the time comes, as it certainly does, even more uniformly with the latter than with the former, for clouds of racking doubts to rush over the mind, it comes to them, not in the form of any disposition to apply a narrow standard derived from visible things to the measure of invisible things, not usually in the shape of

Digitized by Google

any doubt of supernatural realities, but in the form of a fixed belief that they are too vast for man to meditate upon at all. The working man, if he become a sceptic, does so generally because he fails altogether to recognise those intimations of a supernatural life,—

> "... those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realised;
> High instincts before which our mortal Nature
> Doth tremble like a guilty Thing surprised;"—

or because he shrinks from them with dislike as a mysterious realm alien to his nature. The cultivated sceptic admits them all, notes them, concedes that they indicate a life derived from Mystery, tending to Mystery; but says, "What are we, that we should try to solve the great enigma?" and so lapses into silence. To him Scepticism is itself a Supernatural Revelation of his ignorance. To the working man it is apt to be an attempt (often almost involuntary) to shut the mind against thoughts and feelings and hopes and fears and instincts he cannot reconcile with his limited sphere of knowledge,—an effort to barricade himself along with "Human Reason in the cave of Natural Speculation" against the Infinite Mysteries of the Universe outside.

We have now devoted only too large a portion of our space to the special phases of working-class scepticism. But they will give us special clues to those sides of positive faith which practically exert the strongest influence upon them. Any influence, we have said, that is strictly divine, will, just because it is *super*natural, repel while it fascinates,—will repel in order to fascinate the more; in other words, will give clear intimation that it is about to restrain and chasten some of our most deeply-ingrained tendencies, as well as that it will strengthen and widen others. Let us now indicate, as briefly as may be, the elements in the Christian faith which, on this principle, are most likely to influence profoundly the working classes. We have seen that the three dangers tending most powerfully to obstruct their access to any spiritual faith are, first, the danger of a mere stupefying Animalism; next, the danger that social and political miseries and wrongs may lead them to reject Religion from the feeling that it is a controlling inward principle, which is apt to hold back the heart from the proclamation of selfish rights, and to chasten the force of human passions; lastly, the danger incident to a naturalistic frame of intellect and a tardy recognition of influences too subtle and too high to analyse and understand. These, then, are the

Digitized by Google

weaknesses of the working classes, which any truly supernatural revelation, any principle *higher* than their nature, would tend to counteract. On the other hand, it ought to appeal to what is most noble and solid in them,—their real and quick appreciation of the distinction between all reality and unreality,—their full experience of the true value and possible valuelessness of labour,—and that deeper sense of the strength of equal social ties among members of the same class, and of the duties, as well as of the rights, that belong to them, than can be found probably in any other grade of society.

Now, first, in correspondence chiefly with that first type of Working-Class irreligion which seems to result from the deadening and mechanising influences of mere physical labour, we may notice that Christian faith always takes hold of the great labouring class as a *spring of fresh life*, not as a *system of opinion*. What they need and crave is, a clearer recognition of the Supernatural Life which stirs more or less faintly within them and renders them dissatisfied with themselves. All dogmatic systems of thought, as such, seem devised expressly in order to *naturalise the supernatural;* that is, to present the new Life offered them as if it were bound by the strictest laws of *our* nature, instead of divinely free to work its own will. Of course, if there be such a Life, touching our own on its brightest side and vivifying it throughout, we must think of it, speak of it, trace its characteristic influence upon ourselves. But to attempt, as theologians do, to represent its influences as restricted within the narrowest limits of human thought, is to cast a direct suspicion on the divine facts of which they speak,—to attempt at least to force them into a disguise of human fiction and error. There is no class in society more alive to the infinite difference between a clear spring of new life and a doctrinal scheme which, while it talks of the Supernatural, shows, by the fine limitation of its terms and the subtlety of its distinctions, that the conditions of contract have at least been drafted by human suggestion, than the labouring class. There is no class which can feel so deeply the barrenness, the monotony, the degradation of a life of labour, where it consists only in meting out day by day so much physical force into the world around them. They often really pine, even when they do not consciously yearn, for freer access to the springs of that supernatural strength, without which the labourer is but a feeble though delicate substitute for steam. While they own no higher end for life than the hope of daily renovating the reservoir of animal force which they daily exhaust, they remain a sullen as well as an unhappy class. But to mock such a class with a cut-and-dried system of reasoning about God, instead of helping them to reach

Digitized by Google

a real well-spring of fresh power within them, is to give them good reason for suspecting that God has nothing to do with the scheme declared to them. They are quite sure,—and they are quite right to be sure,—that a Living Spirit, infinitely higher than their own, and visiting them, if He visit them at all, to elevate and expand their souls with some of the fire of His own infinite holiness and love, would not mask His living agency by affixing to it rules whose very pettiness makes them shrink into themselves and avert their eyes from a gift promised on such conditions.

Nor are we left to general reasoning about the matter. The working classes have never yet given the slightest recognition to the power of dogmatic divinity. The authoress of *English Hearts and English Hands* was frequently met by difficulties arising from this rooted suspicion of divinity. They would not go to church, they would not read their Bibles, because it "would do them no good."* Directly she could stir any conviction in their breasts that the living spirit of God was working within them, she succeeded. And this is the testimony of all religious confessions really emanating from working men. It is, indeed, the true origin of the undue importance attached to "religious experiences." Bunyan, in his account of his own life, affords a most striking illustration of what we have said. It may be termed a kind of journal of the dialogue of years between his mind and God. Most of the addresses attributed to the divine Spirit are no doubt taken verbally from the Bible. But why is this? Exactly because there is no such thing as a system of divinity in the Bible. There we find nothing but a living record of personal relations between God and man, seldom generalised, always intended to be strictly connected with the nation, person, and circumstances to which they refer, and only systematised into rules or laws circumscribing the divine life when the freshness and fullness of their immediate meaning had been lost sight of in the past. The Bible is so dear to the labouring man, when once he learns to value it, exactly because it ignores all dogma. It records an indefinite number of living influences exercised by God over men, and among them he can always find some more or less closely related to his own circumstances; but every where there is the stamp of reality, of vivid human life touched by the living spirit of God, and nowhere any attempt to drive out the very essence of the supernatural by cramping it within the formulas dictated by human notions. Of course the influence recorded is felt to be really divine only so far as it is felt to raise and enlarge our nature, not where it seems to fall below it; but the very con-

* p. 78.

Digitized by Google

dition that divine influence must raise and enlarge it, puts it quite beyond the limits of human logic, which lies clear *within* the strictest bounds of our nature. That to which our thoughts can give the law, is certainly not infinitely higher than our thoughts; that way which we can make plain, is not a way infinitely higher than our ways. No doubt it is true that strictly supernatural influence,—that is, influence which does not follow any law of human nature, but flows into it from a source of power we cannot either reach or command at will,—is not so high above us but that we may recognise and distinguish it as proceeding from a life higher than our own. But this is just the difference between a natural and supernatural influence: that of the former we can speak beforehand, we can learn its effects, we can classify its tendencies, we can more or less explain it from that which is within us; of the latter we can speak certainly only *afterwards*,—we cannot tell what it will do for us, or how it has done it; we only know that it has made us see all the more clearly, that it has vivified what was lifeless, that it has humbled what was proud, that it has shown us light where we expected darkness, and darkness in apparent light; in short, all we know about it is, that it is from above, and that we cannot tell "whence it cometh, or whither it goeth."

Theological attempts to map out and stereotype the conditions of the supernatural influence which touches us,—except so far as they are merely negative conditions, excluding all that is *beneath* the natural standard of man,—necessarily end in expelling all the traces of what is strictly speaking above our *grasp*, though not above our moral perception when once it comes. And such attempts are specially alien to the truest mental habits of the working class. We do not deny that they, like all men, may be seized by the passion for dogmatic abstractions. But they are never so unreal, so far from the special field of their own spiritual life, as when they yield to this passion. The closer the spiritual world is to the hearts of the working classes, the less is it conceived as a well-marked system of dogma; rather does it seem to present a series of luminous points where supernatural light breaks into the bounded nature of man. The Bible is so dear to them because it is as the sound of many voices from Heaven, uttered under every phase of human experience, and not a continuous exposition or discourse. The very habit we sometimes notice with a smile, in such writers as Bunyan, of rending away fragments of Scripture and reproducing them in the strangest isolation, speaks to this. Such fragments were felt as flashes of living inspiration from a Spirit which is manifested chiefly by these touches of power, and which is apt to be lost again in the

Digitized by Google

efforts of the human intellect to draw inferences and reconcile results. The words of Isaiah or St. Paul darted into Bunyan's thought as the only words which would express what his own mind was then realising. Had they been mere portions of a systematic exposition, he would never have thought of them at all; for, as a labouring man of many trials, he did not approach them in an intellectual mood. The same influence fell on his own mind which had fallen on theirs, and he seized the same words to utter it. And it will always be the true test of a Revelation,—not that by it the scale of the divine plan is reduced within the grasp of human intelligence, but that by it "the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed."

The aspect of faith, then, specially adapted to the labouring classes will certainly not be one which has lost all its supernatural life in the naturalising definitions and limitations of theological dogma. However fascinating it may be,—and within certain limits no doubt it is necessary as well as fascinating,—to compare together and reconcile the distinct bearings of different spiritual principles, this is not the fascination which tells upon the working classes. It is the primary insight, not the secondary reasoning, which touches them most deeply, and for which by education they are most fit.

Secondly, in correspondence mainly with the social and political type of Working-Class scepticism, which arises in hatred of "False-Guidance," and in the craving for a true sense of spiritual independence and dependence, we may notice that Christian faith usually takes hold of the Working Class less as a new Supernatural Law, than as a new revelation of their *personal dependence on a Supernatural Righteousness.* It is a common, but probably very erroneous assertion, that the first religious conviction always arises in the sense of a broken law. The uneasiness felt in turning away from the Light is rarely that which first induces men to turn towards the Light. It is a flash of positive conviction of some sort, not a mere check on wrong-doing, which usually gives the impulse. It is seldom that faith begins on the warped side of human nature; though it soon descends to, and quickens into activity, the conscience which has been passive. We believe that any thing which powerfully impresses the mind with spiritual impulses that it cannot satisfy or control at its own pleasure,—whether the impression be produced through the imagination, or the heart, or the conscience,—whether it be like the sense of physical awe which drew out from Peter the confession, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,"—or like the stroke of lightning which by killing Luther's friend at his very side first rent the veil of Nature for the great reformer,—or

Digitized by Google

like the eloquence of Wesley, which thrilled chords of feeling in hard men's bosoms which they did not believe existed there,—or like the personal attraction exerted by a higher human mind, which first makes a man conscious of a disinterested enthusiasm moving him to purposes beyond his own control;—any cause which thus undermines the old foundations of the inward life, and opens a chasm, as it were, in the mind, almost always brings with it the sense of some power deeper and higher than human nature,—some power able to impose a new nature,—in one word, supernatural.

But however the first shock to mere routine habits of thinking and feeling originates, nearly its first effect is to give a new point of view from which to survey and estimate the habitual nature thus broken in upon—to expose clearly its true character and aims. The conscience receives a fresh stimulus from this new sense of instability and uncertainty, and claims the only reality, the only certainty, for the judgments it passes. They are felt to proceed from some centre of stability and permanence, while all else is unstable. They are the witnesses to the presence and utterances of the law of God; a law above our nature, strictly speaking the law of a higher Nature, supernatural, and yet binding on us; suggesting glimpses of a life beyond our present strength, and yet accompanied by a conviction that they *ought* to be within it. This is the common conflict between supernatural law and nature, or habit, so much insisted on by theologians. That it is a universal part of that religion which seizes the strongest hold of the working class, we do not doubt. And yet we believe that the crisis is with them far less complicated and enduring, though probably more intense for the time, than with a more intellectually cultivated class. The moral theology of St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Luther does not often express most characteristically this crisis of working-class religion,—at least at the present day. St. Paul's experience was essentially that of a man whose mind had always recognised some high standard of life, but had to change one with which his own pride and most cherished self-respect were bound up, for one imposed on him from above. The result was, that there was a constant conflict between two moral laws in him,—the external one he had patronised and expounded and worked so hard to exemplify in himself; and the inward one which pronounced all that other standard base, which showed him the self-trust which it contained, the spurious confidence it had engendered, the intellectual arrogance it had promoted. "Works" with St. Paul stood for the justifying acts suggested by this lower law; "faith" for the attitude of mind inspired by a perfect submission of the will to Christ, in

Digitized by Google

the conviction of its own powerlessness. The same exactly may be said of Augustine and Luther. Both of them had found for themselves a code of moral and intellectual life before they received that intense impression that no such code of life can be laid down *for oneself* without containing in a more subtle form most of the spiritual sins which common vice contains in their simplest form; and both of them, therefore, vehemently contrasted the false external type of righteousness "by law" with the true and humble type of righteousness by self-abandonment to Christ.

We do not believe that this antithesis truly represents the most common experience of the working class. They are more likely to be cast in St. Peter's mould than St. Paul's. They have a deep enough sense of a law hard to fulfil; but they are not so much in danger of self-deception from trusting in a false superficial law as contrasted with a true supernatural law. Hence the more complex and subtle elements of St. Paul's theology are less adapted to them than to more cultivated men liable to the temptation of having a moral standard which they take conscious pride in as *their own*. Their difficulty is in avoiding simple sin, not in avoiding an elaborate form of sin under the semblance of good. They have usually no active pride in a "natural law" to break through, in order to reach that supernatural law which "is sharp and powerful as any two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit;" for their soul and spirit, in this sense, are one and the same.

Hence we believe that the *personal* stage in religious faith,—that is, the stage when the mind grasps eagerly at personal help and trust,—comes much sooner in this than in more complex stages of culture. Here, again, St. Peter, rather than St. Paul, is the type of the class. St. Paul's mind eventually learned to refer all confirming and purifying influences to Christ; but this was after a long and bitter experience of the falsity and shallowness of moral standards set up by itself. St. Peter's, perhaps, never reached the same depth of spiritual humility; but it was not that he ever set up an independent morality which he imagined himself capable of fulfilling, but that he knew altogether less about himself,—thought less about his own weakness, and less also about the sources of his strength. He was more presumptuous, but much less tenacious, than St. Paul. His confidence was not confidence in "the law," but the blind confidence of a mind that felt right at the moment, and could not imagine the true strength of temptation. St. Paul's false confidence, which it cost him so much pains to eradicate, was in a deeply matured and partially noble standard of excellence, into which subtle elements of selfishness had in-

Digitized by Google

fused themselves without his knowledge. But the working classes, as we have said, are not so much in danger of this kind of self-deception. They learn to feel rightly, and then distrust too little their own temporary mood of feeling. They learn easily and eagerly to revere and love what is right, and forget how easily such moods of mind may vanish under a sudden temptation. Hence, in their religious faith, the attitude of personal dependence on God is natural to them at an earlier stage than to those who are fascinated by the intermediate dream of a moral standard which they are competent to attain for themselves and by their own efforts; but, at the same time, it is not nearly so spiritual and true a dependence as that which the Pauline class of minds will attain after the dream of their own strength has vanished away for ever. The personal religion of the working class is apt to be, like St. Peter's, a religion of feeling, and therefore presumptuous in a blind way.

And this result is aided by the other characteristic of the labouring class,—the stronger sense of social life,—the closer moral contact with each other which so often renders dreams of Socialism and Chartism a kind of substitute for religious trust. This is partly, no doubt, due to the want of a separate world of thought and imagination to which to retire; yet more to habits of closely associated labour, and the habits of mutual coöperation and help so induced. But whatever it be owing to, in one way or another the social ties of the labouring classes are much closer and more constant than those of any other. Scarcely any class of educated persons—children alone excepted—are so generally dependent on each other, and so open to social influence, as the working classes. We do not say that they form such intimate personal ties as may now and then be found amongst more cultivated people; but their habitual reliance on the influence and society of others is certainly much greater. Here again St. Peter, rather than St. Paul, is the apostle of the working man. St. Paul's dependence on Christ was purely spiritual, and clearly not due to any habit of looking to others for guidance or support; St. Peter's was unconscious and, so to say, social,—the dependence of a mind that found rest in the judgment of another, without even fully realising that that judgment was purer, deeper, more spiritual than his own. St. Paul rested in the spirit of Christ only: so clearly did St. Peter, in his highest moods; but there were evidently times also when he rather leaned on the remembered Master than held fast by a supernatural strength.

Now if this too be the general characteristic of the working classes, as we believe it is, we infer that the aspect of religious conviction which will at once appeal most truly to their highest

Digitized by Google

experience and tend to counteract their characteristic weakness is, not so much that which elaborates the contrast between the natural "law" and the supernatural, in order to prove the incompatibility of a religious life with a self-trusting spirit, but rather that which dwells on the distinction between a blind natural act of dependence or reliance, and that opening or surrender of the mind to a higher life, *because it is higher and more searching*, which properly constitutes what St. Paul meant by "faith" or trust. St. Paul was in no danger of that blind and confident reliance which is mere dependence, and cannot be called trust since it does not in any way consciously seek or welcome the characteristic influence of the Object of trust. He apparently seldom warned his disciples against it. But on this very account the power of the "faith" he preached has been almost lost upon the working classes of the present day. The "faith in Christ's blood" recommended to them,—by such well-meaning friends as the authoress of *English Hearts and English Hands*, for instance,—no longer imports trust in the innermost strength of that Spirit by which Christ laid down his life, but a mere natural habit of mind, which might be cultivated with scarcely a passing gleam of the divine life needed and implored. It is, indeed, represented almost as a magical spell, rather than a full surrender to One higher and holier on the ground that in Him alone human nature is at rest. There is for many men far more danger of false reliance on "faith" as a mere habitual human act than on any pride in fulfilling a mere human "law;" and for such minds the distinction between natural and supernatural dependence—that is, between an unjustifiable leaning on another without any thought of *what* the Will is on which we lean, and that faith of which it is the very essence, at least to desire to realise that His Will is supernatural and above our own, is most important. The religion of the working classes will ever be a personal trust, as, indeed, all true religion is; but it must be a trust in the *person* of God, not a mere habit of depending on something outside themselves, on which they have been taught on authority that there are "good grounds" to lean. Nothing can realise more finely the distinction between this natural and supernatural faith, which we desire to see impressed on the working classes, than the following noble letter from Cromwell to his daughter's husband. It is the more remarkable because it is written with a double warning, —against St. Paul's "law" on the one hand, and against superstitious trust in a mere "act" of faith on the other hand: "Bid her beware," he writes, "of a bondage spirit. Fear is the natural issue of such a spirit; the antidote is love. The voice of fear is: *If I had done this, if I had avoided that, how well it*

Digitized by Google

had been with me! I know this hath been her vain reasoning. Love argueth in this wise: What a Christ have I, what a Father in and through Him! What a name hath my Father—*merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin!* What a nature hath my Father! *He is* Love;—free in it, unchangeable, infinite! What a covenant between Him and Christ,—for all the seed, for every one, wherein He undertakes all, and the poor soul nothing! The new covenant is *Grace*, to or upon the soul, to which it is passive and receptive: *I'll do away their sins; I'll write my law, &c.; I'll put it in their hearts; they shall never depart from me, &c.* This commends the love of God; it's Christ dying for men *without strength*,—for men whilst sinners, whilst enemies. And shall we seek for the root of our comforts within us? What God hath done, what He is to us in Christ, is the root of our comfort. In this is stability; in us is weakness. *Acts of obedience are not perfect, and therefore yield not perfect Grace. Faith, as an act, yields it not but as it carries us into Him, who is our perfect rest and peace;* in whom we are accounted of, and received by, the Father, even as Christ himself! *This is our high calling. Rest we here, and here only!*"

Bunyan illustrates the same consciousness that the doctrine of "justification by faith" might be misinterpreted, when he makes "Ignorance," the "brisk lad who came out of the country of Vain Conceit," trust that his acts, not *himself*, will be made acceptable through Christ. "This faith maketh not Christ a justifier of thy person, but of thy actions," says Christian, "and of thy person for thy actions' sake, which is false;" intending clearly to express, that unless the human spirit is, by its faith, brought into personal union with the divine will, faith is a mere conjuring-trick, and not what St. Paul meant by faith at all.

Finally, we can but indicate with the utmost brevity the influence that such a faith must have on what we have called the third type of Working-Class irreligion,—that secularistic type of intellect which the limited education, and often narrowing occupation, of the labouring classes tends so strongly to produce. A faith that merely amounts to the blind assumption that some aid has been given by a supernatural being which supersedes the necessity of human anxiety, has obviously no effect on the intellect of man at all. But if "faith as an act" is to be nothing, except so far as it carries us "into the Spirit of Him who is our perfect rest and peace," it obviously brings with it an attitude of mind which cannot but affect the intellect as well as the will. For such faith involves a willingness to have the whole nature enlarged; it does not anticipate the Will of God, but strives to learn from that Will as He manifests it to us; and such an

Digitized by Google

attitude of mind involves many a painful discovery how ill we interpret it, how different He is from our prescribed formulas for Him, how He has purposes for us in places and in actions, and even in moods of feeling, which we had despised and dreaded, and none where we had made up our minds that we were to go. But it is impossible for men thus to leave their own ways for His higher ways, without finding also that they must leave their own thoughts to accept His higher thoughts, —that the human intellect must be at once as humble and as pliant as the will, if there is to be any faith at all. Thus may the labouring classes learn that the thoughts which their ablest men express with such wonderful vigour and precision, are not unfrequently so easy to apprehend mainly because the thinkers were really blind to a thousand lines of thought and shades of feeling which really demanded recognition; and because, seeing only that which they could completely comprehend, they strove to see no more. The intellect must open to the supernatural world above when once the moral character has opened to it. The divine Word must influence the mind when the divine Work is permitted to take effect upon the will. It will be seen then that all human thought of spiritual realities is but the dark glass through which a divine meaning struggles imperfectly into our minds; that even the highest thought of the poet and the prophet is but a glass from which a few little clouds have been chased away. And it will be seen, too, that whatever definite meaning these things have to us now, they can only retain on condition that we permit them to gain a larger and larger significance by freely opening our minds as the meaning we dimly see expands. The secularistic intellect, as we have termed it, is too often contemptuous,—disposed to identify the limits of its own experience with those of truth itself. It is as yet, in the English leaders of Secularism, real enough to insist on the distinction between ignorance and denial. Yet this is not enough, unless it also strains at the bounds of its knowledge, and strives to grasp the fullest contents of other men's thought. Unless it does this, it will dwindle into a shrunken bundle of logical formulæ, and lose even all the hold it has on the labouring class. For that class does not, and never can, live on intellectual suspense; its life is too vigorous and too practical; it loves to trust in the life above Nature, and so finds access to the Light that shines through Nature. And if it follow that light, surely even the "dim common populations," as they have been called, may yet present the world with the highest type of human faith,—since it will be a faith binding together larger masses, and interpreted by a wider brotherhood of minds, than any hitherto attained.

Digitized by Google

Art. VIII.—LONGFELLOW.

Poems. By Henry W. Longfellow. Bogue, 1851.
The Song of Hiawatha. By H. W. Longfellow. Bogue, 1851.
The Prose Works of H. W. Longfellow. Bogue, 1851.
The Courtship of Miles Standish and other Poems. By H. W. Longfellow. Kent and Co., 1858.

The actual quantity of Mr. Longfellow's writings, considerable as it is, is much less than might be supposed from the number and variety of editions in which they are to be met with. No recent poet, we should imagine, has enjoyed so great an amount of publication. We meet with his works every where and in every form,—in complete editions on the counters of the regular booksellers, in stacks of little shilling volumes on railway bookstalls, and in gorgeously-bound and profusely-illustrated volumes on drawing-room tables. He is unquestionably the most popular poet of the day. Country newspapers habitually adorn their columns with his minor pieces; young ladies sing his pathetic poems at the piano; and lecturers at mechanics' institutions invariably quote his moral and didactic verses. Not only is Mr. Longfellow's popularity extraordinarily great, it was extraordinarily rapid also. We do not doubt that it is greater now than ever, and that it has gone on increasing up to the present time; but we believe that very soon after the appearance of the first collection of his works it was greater than that of any contemporary poet. He took the public ear at once and immediately; he required no introduction from critics and reviewers; he had not to convert or educate his audience, but found it ready and responsive from the first.

The causes of this rapid and remarkable popularity are easily traceable in Mr. Longfellow's poems, especially his earlier ones. His merits certainly do not consist in any imaginative originality. The moral and intellectual quality of the *Voices of the Night* is such as appeals to the sympathies, and falls within the comprehension, of every reader. They are written from what may be called every body's point of view; they express, always neatly, sometimes gracefully, and now and then beautifully, what nine-tenths of their readers think and feel on the subject, or rather what they know they ought to think and feel. "What the heart of the young man said to the psalmist," is exactly what the heart of every good and thoughtful and laudably ambitious young man would say to him. *The Footsteps of Angels, The Reaper and the Flowers, The Light of Stars, Midnight Mass for the dying Year,* merely develop, prettily and fancifully, common

Digitized by Google

ideas, and ideas, too, suggested in their entireness by the very titles of these poems. So intelligible and unobjectionable is Mr. Longfellow's thought, so obvious and universally admitted his moral tendency, that we can quite believe what we have heard, that people who neither understand nor care for other poetry buy his as a sort of thing that "deserves encouragement."

The same commonplaceness of intellectual character is shown in those of Mr. Longfellow's poems in which the interest is historical. His impressions here also are those which ought to be made on "any well-constituted mind." The author of *Eothen* says: "If one might judge of men's real thoughts by their writings, it would seem that there are people who can visit an interesting locality and follow up continuously the exact train of thought that ought to be suggested by the historical associations of the place. A person of this sort can go to Athens, and think of nothing later than the age of Pericles; can live with the Scipios as long as he remains in Rome; can go up in a balloon, and think how resplendently in former times the now vacant and desolate air was peopled with angels, how prettily it was crossed at intervals by the rounds of Jacob's ladder." Mr. Longfellow's trains of thought are exactly of this character. This is how he moralises over some *Sand of the Desert in an Hour-glass:*

"How many weary centuries has it been
About those deserts blown!
How many strange vicissitudes has seen,
How many histories known!

Perhaps the camels of the Ishmaelite
Trampled and passed it o'er,
When into Egypt from the patriarch's sight
His favourite son they bore.

Perhaps the feet of Moses, burnt and bare,
Crushed it beneath their tread;
Or Pharaoh's flashing wheels into the air
Scattered it as they sped;

Or Mary, with the Christ of Nazareth
Held close in her caress,
Whose pilgrimage of hope and love and faith
Illumed the wilderness;

Or anchorites beneath Engaddi's palms,
Pacing the Red-Sea beach,
And singing slow their old Armenian psalms
In half-articulate speech;

Or caravan, that from Bussora's gate
With westward steps depart;
Or Mecca's pilgrims, confident of Fate
And resolute in heart."

Digitized by Google

We have no doubt that most readers would prefer a string of reflections about the past such as the above to a poetical reproduction of the past like Tennyson's *Sir Galahad* or *St. Agnes*, or Browning's *The Bishop orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church* or *In a Spanish Convent*. These latter give us the essential spirit and peculiar features of the past,—features unexpected perhaps, but recognised as true as soon as presented; every word of Browning's about the middle ages is, as Mr. Ruskin observes, "vital, right, and profound." Mr. Longfellow has the abstract and generalised impressions of the past which every one derives from reading history; and where he endeavours to reproduce it, he gives us the conventional idea and traditional costume of the period. *The Belfry of Bruges, Nuremberg*, and similar poems, are merely a fluent and musical expression of thoughts and fancies which would at once occur to any intelligent visitor of those famous towns with Murray's Handbook under his arm. His imagination never properly throws itself into the past; but sees it through the haze of distance, and so catches only its familiar and general outline and most prominent features. The emperors are "rough and bold;" the burghers "brave and thrifty;" the monks "merry" or "holy;" in every case the regular stock epithet embodying the popular idea. Any one of his poems of this kind will illustrate this. Take the opening of the one called *The Emperor's Bird's-Nest*, in the last volume:

> "Once the Emperor, Charles of Spain,
> With his *swarthy grave* commanders,
> I forget in what campaign,
> Long besieged through mud and rain
> Some old frontier town of Flanders.
>
> Up and down the dreary camp,
> In great boots of Spanish leather,
> Striding with a measured tramp,
> These Hidalgos," &c.

Every one must feel the difference between these stage Spaniards, made up out of the time-honoured theatrical "properties," and the sort of picture which a poet possessed of true reproductive imagination would have given us. It may be said that the simple incident which forms the subject of the piece did not require, or even admit of, deeper and more refined truthfulness of treatment in its accessories: but that Mr. Longfellow has no historical insight, is proved both by his almost invariable and instinctive choice of such subjects,—subjects in which the interest is directly moral and universal,—and by his failure to give us any less generalised and more characteristic description in the one or two poems in which it is called for. In *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, for instance, the personages of the story are made up

Digitized by Google

of the same cheap and ready historical material: the rugged and religious Puritan captain, "clad in doublet and hose and boots of Cordovan leather," who is introduced "striding," of course, "with a martial air;" John Alden,

> ". . . . . his friend and household companion,
> Writing with diligent speed at a table of pine by a window,
> Fair-haired, azure-eyed,"—

a sort of small Cromwell and Milton, in fact,—these, and the "Puritan maiden, Priscilla," are all lay-figures. Mr. Longfellow's poems of this class always remind us of the lithographs of our old halls and castles in popular "galleries of illustration," in which two or three well-known and most obvious characteristics of architecture and costume are seized on and brought into undue relief for the sake of effect; the oaken rafters are more massive, the window-seats deeper, the chimney-piece more prominent and more elaborately carved, the ladies have longer trains, and the cavaliers' hats are more slouched, than probably they ever were; every thing is intensely "of the period," and all is *ad captandum*, untruthful, and superficial. He has a vague poetical feeling about the past, rather than a clear poetic insight into it; not what the past was, but what has come down to us about it, forms the subject of his poems:

> "Old legends of the monkish page,
> Traditions of the saint and sage,
> Tales that have the rime of age,
> And chronicles of eld."

The frequent occurrence in his verses of such expressions as "olden," "eld," "quaint," &c., are sufficient to indicate his position in this respect.

As a describer of nature Mr. Longfellow holds a higher place than as an interpreter of the life of man, either in the present or the past. He sees further into the forest than into the crowd; and his limited range of experience and of sympathy are, of course, not so directly and palpably felt. The American poets are all, as far as we have observed, comparatively strong in depicting natural scenery, while deficient in thought and culture. Man, with his passions and struggles and perplexities, plays but a secondary part in their writings; he is dwarfed and subdued in the presence of the vast and impressive scenery by which he is surrounded. Bryant's poems are mainly addressed to, or concerned with, rivers, woods, waterfalls, and mountains. And although these things do not occupy quite so large a share of Mr. Longfellow's attention, the space that they do fill is larger in proportion to the human interest than in any English poet. In the latter—even in Wordsworth, in whom this element is larger than

Digitized by Google

in any other English poet—nature is, if not subordinate, subsidiary to man; there is human life, though it be but a solitary figure in the foreground: in the former, the centre of human interest is often almost lost in the wildness and vastness of the natural objects amidst which it moves. To the latter Nature is humanised, so to speak, by old memories and associations; to the former she presents the aspect of something unfamiliar, unexplored, unconquered, and independent. Connected with this is another difference between the two: in the poets of our own country the *permanence* of nature is contrasted with the transience of human life; in the American, her extent is her most striking aspect. No doubt the latter is dwelt on in many English poets, but in none is it so unconsciously and yet so forcibly conveyed as in the following passage from *Evangeline:*

" It was the month of May. Far down the beautiful river,
Past the Ohio shore and past the mouth of the Wabash,
Into the golden stream of the broad and swift Mississippi,
Floated a cumbrous boat, that was rowed by Acadian boatmen.
It was a band of exiles: a raft, as it were, from the shipwrecked
Nation, scattered along the coast, now floating together,
Bound by the bonds of a common belief and a common misfortune;
Men, and women, and children, who, guided by hope or by hearsay,
Sought for their kith and their kin among the few-acred farmers
On the Acadian coast, and the prairies of fair Opelousas.
With them Evangeline went, and her guide the Father Felician.
Onward o'er sunken sands, through a wilderness sombre with forests,
Day after day they glided adown the turbulent river;
Night after night, by their blazing fires, encamped on its borders.
Now through rushing chutes, among green islands, where plumelike
Cotton-trees nodded their shadowy crests, they swept with the current,
Then emerged into broad lagoons, where silvery sand-bars
Lay in the stream, and along the wimpling waves of their margin,
Shining with snow-white plumes, large flocks of pelicans waded.
Level the landscape grew, and along the shores of the river,
Shaded by china-trees, in the midst of luxuriant gardens,
Stood the houses of planters, with negro cabins and dovecots.
They were approaching the region where reigns perpetual summer,
Where through the golden coast, and groves of orange and citron,
Sweeps with majestic curve the river away to the eastward.
They too swerved from their course; and, entering the Bayou of
Plaquemine,
Soon were lost in a maze of sluggish and devious waters,
Which, like a network of steel, extended in every direction.
Over their heads the towering and tenebrous bows of the cypress
Met in a dusky arch, and trailing mosses in mid air
Waved like banners that hang on the walls of ancient cathedrals.
Death-like the silence seemed and unbroken, save by the herons
Home to their roosts in the cedar-trees returning at sunset,
Or by the owl, as he greeted the moon with demoniac laughter.
Lovely the moonlight was as it glanced and gleamed on the water,
Gleamed on the columns of cypress and cedar, sustaining the arches;
Down through whose broken vaults it fell as through chinks in a ruin.

Digitized by Google

Dreamlike, and indistinct, and strange were all things around them;
And o'er their spirits there came a feeling of wonder and sadness,—
Strange forebodings of ill, unseen and that cannot be compassed.
* * * * * * * *
Then in his place, at the prow of the boat, rose one of the oarsmen,
And, as a signal sound, if others like them peradventure
Sailed on those gloomy and midnight streams, blew a blast on his bugle.
Wild through the dark colonnades and corridors leafy the blast rang,
Breaking the seal of silence, and giving tongues to the forest.
Soundless above them the banners of moss just stirred to the music.
Multitudinous echoes awoke and died in the distance,
Over the watery floor, and beneath the reverberant branches;
But not a voice replied; no answer came from the darkness;
And when the echoes had ceased, like a sense of pain was the silence.
Then Evangeline slept; but the boatmen rowed through the midnight,
Silent at times, then singing familiar Canadian boat-songs,
Such as they sang of old on their own Canadian rivers.
And through the night were heard the mysterious sounds of the desert,
Far off, indistinct, as of wave or wind in the forest,
Mixed with whoop of the crane and the roar of the grim alligator."

It is scenery of this vast and impressive kind that Mr. Longfellow describes best. He has a true eye for its salient features, though his sight does not reach much beyond these. He is a steady and truthful, though not profound or minute observer. Except in the case of some of the grander natural objects, such as forests and the sea, Mr. Longfellow describes in a fresh and unaffected way not only what would strike every spectator, but what every spectator would find little difficulty in putting into words. He never gives us any of those surprising touches which, like the scent of May-blossom, place us at once in the midst of long-forgotten sights and sounds, with all their indescribable associations. He takes in just so much of a landscape as harmonises with the thought or feeling in his mind, and apart from these his descriptions have comparatively little value. In Tennyson, and generally in poets of a high class, the thought and meaning of the poems are more profound and less obvious; the corresponding natural scenery is less consciously selected, and therefore less superficially appropriate. In that wonderful poem in *In Memoriam* beginning

"Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,"

though there is not a feature in the stormy landscape unrelated to the mourning mind which looks out on it, the correspondence is less complete point by point, and the description, simply regarded as a description of a certain aspect of the outer world, has greater power, freedom, and truth. We do not say that the natural scenery in Mr. Longfellow's poems is merely *illustrative*, or that his thought is merely the reflection of the natural scenery; we believe that there is in many of his poems the real

Digitized by Google

fusion of the two which must take place in the minds of all genuine poets, only that this fusion is less thorough than in the case of Tennyson and some other poets. What we mean will perhaps be made more clear by taking an instance in which Mr. Longfellow has not fulfilled this condition. His works furnish several examples, but we take the following as the shortest:

> "I shot an arrow into the air,
> It fell to earth, I knew not where;
> For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
> Could not follow it in its flight.
>
> I breathed a song into the air,
> It fell to earth, I knew not where;
> For who has sight so keen and strong
> That it can follow the flight of song?
>
> Long, long afterward, in an oak
> I found the arrow, still unbroke;
> And the song, from beginning to end,
> I found again in the heart of a friend."

Every one feels that this is merely a conscious and cold-blooded following out of some analogy between the moral and the physical worlds, which a poet of greater power would have condensed into a word instead of expanding into several verses. *The Rainy Day*, *Daylight and Moonlight*, and one or two others, are manufactured precisely after the same pattern. If he had not produced any thing better than such pretty and ingenious toys, he would not have deserved the name of a poet. That he has evidently a taste for such things, and that many of his pieces in their construction betray marks of this mechanical origin, is a fault so grave, that we are obliged, in order to forget it, to recall the genuine poetry which he writes in his happier moments.

In consequence of the defect we have endeavoured to indicate, Mr. Longfellow is less successful in his descriptions of natural scenery in those poems in which it is introduced in combination with human thought and feeling, than in those in which it is an object of direct contemplation. His poetry of this kind has been called "looking-glass poetry;" and as regards the clearness and literalness, if not the minuteness, with which it gives back some aspects of nature, the expression is a good one. We think Mr. Longfellow's happiest efforts in this kind are those in which he describes northern or wintry scenery. One of his best touches is in an early poem, *Woods in Winter:*

> "Where, from their frozen urns, mute springs
> Pour out the river's gradual tide,
> Shrilly the skater's iron rings,
> And voices fill the woodland side."

None of Mr. Longfellow's poems show much creative or dra-

Digitized by Google

matic power except *Hiawatha;* in which a small germ of Indian tradition has been expanded into an altogether unique story,—a strange mixture of mythology, romance, and fable, as unlike all other poems with which we are acquainted as a savage in his war-paint is unlike all civilised people, but not without some vigorous pictures of forest life and scenery, and a certain soft and noiseless grace like that of the people it describes. This is undoubtedly the most original of all the author's poems; and it has a certain humour of its own,—a quality not possessed by any of Mr. Longfellow's other poems. We much admire the following description of Hiawatha's victory over the ravens and capture of their king:

> "Only Kahgahgee, the leader,
> Kahgahgee the king of ravens,
> He alone was spared among them
> As a hostage for his people.
> With his prisoner-string he bound him,
> Led him captive to his wigwam,
> Tied him fast with cords of elm-bark
> To the ridge-pole of his wigwam.
>
> 'Kahgahgee, my raven!' said he,
> 'You the leader of the robbers,
> You the plotter of this mischief,
> The contriver of this outrage,
> I will keep you, I will hold you
> As a hostage for your people,
> As a pledge of good behaviour!'
>
> And he left him, grim and sulky,
> Sitting in the morning sunshine
> On the summit of the wigwam,
> Croaking fiercely his displeasure,
> Flapping his great sable pinions,
> Vainly struggling for his freedom,
> Vainly calling on his people!"

Mr. Longfellow is quite unrivalled when he has Indian demigods, beavers, sturgeons, and woodpeckers for his characters; and we think he succeeds next best where, as in *Evangeline,* the characters are about half way between the "Hiawatha" people and educated English or Americans of the present day. His poetical faculty is well adapted for the narration of some simple story which keeps the even tenor of its way among the pastoral occupations and fireside incidents of a primitive people: and such have been the subjects he has chosen for two of his longest poems, *Evangeline* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish;* of which the earlier poem is in our opinion far better than the later one. Both the story and the characters are more interesting, the scenery is more varied and more richly coloured, and the later

Digitized by Google

poem contains no incident nearly as good as the passing of Evangeline and her lover close by each other in their boats without either being aware of it. Both of them are stories from the annals of Mr. Longfellow's own land; and with these, from the simpler and more elementary character of the events recorded in them, he is less incompetent to deal than with the earlier stages of European civilisation. The hexameter metre in which they are written is not altogether unadapted to their subject, or to the fluent garrulity of Mr. Longfellow's narrative. The effect, however, of these, and of all other English hexameters with which we are acquainted, soon becomes unpleasant. They lead one on and on, but with an increasing desire to stop. They seem necessarily to generate standing attributes and stock phrases. When a writer has struck out such a good dactyle-and-spondee epithet for Priscilla as "Puritan maiden," or for Hobomok as "friend of the white man," we must make up our minds to its sticking to them. It is not in human nature to resort to the *gradus* without absolute necessity.

In intimating that a certain commonplace and superficial character belongs to all Mr. Longfellow's poetry, we by no means imply that he is not a true poet. His mind more readily and naturally and sufficiently expresses itself in poetical forms than that of many poets whose productions contain elements of far higher quality; his poems are more harmonious, more complete as specimens of the art, than theirs. Indeed, his very success in what he aims at is greatly owing, not of course to his powers being limited, but to their being equally limited in every direction. With more thought, he might have been acceptable to a higher class of readers; but he would, *cæteris paribus*, have produced poems inferior, as poems, to his present ones. What his writings would have gained in originality and power, they would have lost in symmetry and completeness. A tithe of Browning's psychological subtlety, or Tennyson's ripened wisdom, would have checked Mr. Longfellow's facile and melodious utterance of fallacious commonplaces and popular half-truths; but it would also have deprived us of many graceful fancies, salutary thoughts, and pretty and finished pictures. The easy symbolism in which Mr. Longfellow delights, would not have served to convey thoughts derived from a profounder insight and a wider experience, or emotions of a more refined and complex character; and his employment of it is of itself sufficient to show that he is not one of those who have become wise by "deeply drinking in the soul of things." Yet this forms the groundwork of many of his most attractive and most popular poems, and in one or two cases is employed with really beautiful and poetical effect, as in his recent poem of *The*

Digitized by Google

Two Angels, in which he has transcended his usual limits in depth of feeling and force of expression. Mr. Longfellow has much genuine religious earnestness; and this has given some of his poems on slavery, the hymn for his brother's ordination, and one or two others, an unusual firmness and a fervency of tone. The following little poem, simple and quiet as it is, is in a higher strain than almost any thing he has written:

"She dwells by great Kenhawa's side,
In valleys green and cool;
And all her hope and all her pride
Are in the village-school.

Her soul, like the transparent air
That robes the hills above,
Though not of earth, encircles there
All things with arms of love.

And thus she walks among her girls
With praise and mild rebuke;
Subduing e'en rude village churls
By her angelic look.

She reads to them at eventide
Of One who came to save;
To cast the captive's chains aside,
And liberate the slave.

And oft the blessed time foretells
When all men shall be free,
And musical as silver bells
Their falling chains shall be.

And following her beloved Lord,
In decent poverty,
She makes her life one sweet record
And deed of charity.

For she was rich; and gave up all
To break the iron bands
Of those who waited in her hall,
And laboured in her lands.

Long since beyond the southern sea
Their outbound sails have sped;
While she, in meek humility,
Now earns her daily bread.

It is their prayers, which never cease,
That clothe her with such grace;
Their blessing is the light of peace
That shines upon her face."

It is in little poems of this character that Mr. Longfellow succeeds best; and his later ones show a great improvement on the *Voices of the Night,* which are characterised by great immaturity of thought and a vein of very juvenile sentiment. *The Two Angels,* already alluded to, *The Warden of the Cinque Ports,*

Digitized by Google

and *Victor Galbraith*, are decidedly superior to any of his earlier productions. The first three verses of the second of these are a great contrast to the weak prosaic and matter-of-fact openings of which Mr. Longfellow is so fond, such as,

> "This is the place, stand still, my steed;"

or,

> "In Mather's Magnalia Christi
> Of the old colonial time."

They run thus:

> "A mist was driving down the British Channel,
> The day was just begun,
> And through the window-panes, on floor and panel,
> Streamed the red autumn sun.
>
> It glanced on flowing flag and rippling pennon,
> And the white sails of ships;
> And from the frowning rampart the black cannon
> *Hailed it with feverish lips.*
>
> Sandwich and Romney, Hastings, Hithe, and Dover
> Were all alert that day,
> To see the French war-steamers speeding over
> When the fog cleared away."

There is more vigour and condensation in these lines than in any others of the author which we remember. We should call to mind, too, in order to appreciate adequately the historical force of the third verse, that a French invasion was generally dreaded, if not expected on the day of the Duke's death. Generally, we think, Mr. Longfellow rises with a really great and impressive subject. He has scarcely the materials within his own mind for furnishing forth a poem; but when his sympathies are strongly called out by a striking character or event, his verses are seldom unworthy of the occasion.

Mr. Longfellow's plays have, in our opinion, less merit even than his longer poems. He has no dramatic power; and it is impossible to take the slightest interest in the colourless and unreal personages of *The Spanish Student* and *The Golden Legend*. There are occasional descriptions in them marked by a certain weak grace and delicacy of language; and the venerable traditions of the playwright as to the duty of breaking-up the serious business at due intervals by snatches of song and that peculiar species of comic repartee among the minor characters which makes the deepest tragedy an intense relief, are all faithfully observed. On the whole, they are neither better nor worse than the general run of those plays, one or more of which so many clever and cultivated men think fit in their lifetime to publish, we suppose as a sacrifice to oblivion.

Of Mr. Longfellow's prose works, the best known, *Hyperion*, has little continuous interest; its slender thread of a love-story

Digitized by Google

being altogether lost amid the profuse and gaudy descriptions and sentimental and high-flown musings. *Kavanagh* is decidedly better; there is more story, and the characters of Mr. Churchill the schoolmaster, who makes no progress with his great poem, and puzzles his wife out of the Sanscrit arithmetic-book in the evenings; of Sally Manchester; and of the mischievous schoolboy "Billy Wilmerdings," who promises his mother that if she will forgive him he will "experience religion," are drawn with a quiet humour one would scarcely have expected from Mr. Longfellow. *Kavanagh* is altogether a very pleasant and freshly-coloured tale of American village-life, with its primitive conditions, its transparent and amusing affectations, its homely joys and sorrows. But prose fiction, or indeed prose or fiction of any kind, is not Mr. Longfellow's *forte*. He is a born poet, though not a poet of the highest rank; and his strength lies in the melodious and graceful expression of some

> "Familiar matter of to-day,
> Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
> That has been, and may be again."

We cannot take leave of Mr. Longfellow without saying what it is not exactly in our province as critics to say, but what is never unfelt in forming an estimate of a writer,—that his readers insensibly acquire from his writings a very strong regard and affection for their author.

Art. IX.—MANSEL'S LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

The Limits of Religious Thought examined in Eight Lectures, preached before the University of Oxford, in the year 1858, *on the Foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton, M.A., Canon of Salisbury.* By Henry Longueville Mansel, B.D., Reader in Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy at Magdalen College; Tutor and late Fellow of St. John's College. London: Murray, 1858.

The Canon of Salisbury must have entertained a strange idea of the exigencies of the orthodox Christian faith, when he provided it, by bequest of his estates, with a fresh defence every year till the day of judgment. To the Aberdeen merchant whose munificence evoked Archbishop Sumner's *Records of Creation* and Mr. Thompson's *Christian Theism*, it seemed sufficient if a new buttress were added, or a new approach were opened, to the

Digitized by Google

edifice every forty years. Even at this rate the pure gospel must become coated over, like the focus of a labyrinth, with excessive protection, or be accessible, like an Egyptian sanctuary, through an endless propylæum. But if Oxford is to widen its zone of "evidences" just forty times as fast, and annually drive back the lines of "heretics and schismatics," it is alarming to think how the little oratory of true worship will lie in the midst of a Russian empire of demonstration; with certain proof of one text at least, that scarcely will "the world itself contain the books that have been written." To judge, however, from the seventy years or so that have elapsed since the foundation, the Bampton Lectures are not unlikely to melt into oblivion at one end as fast as they come into existence at the other. In proportion to the number of eminent names that appear in the series, including Heber, Milman, Whately, Hampden, and Thompson, it is remarkable how few of the volumes can be regarded as permanent enrichments of our theological literature. The nomination to the lectureship seems to oppress the natural forces of even strong minds; to reduce genius and learning to commonplace, if it does not tempt them into heresy. In a few exceptional instances, —as Bishop Hampden's volume on the Scholastic Philosophy,— the series illustrates the painful cost at which reputations are won in theology; in many more it shows the facility with which they may be lost. Among the recent annual occupants of St. Mary's pulpit have been two accomplished logicians, Provost Thompson and Dr. Mansel; but the *Lectures on the Atonement* had no trace of intellectual identity with the lucid and comprehensive *Outline of the Laws of Thought;* and now the acute and well-read author of the *Prolegomena Logica* gives us, on the greatest of subjects, a book which, in spite of its careful elaboration and literary skill, will probably convince no one but himself, and be felt by many of his best readers to unsettle the very bases it was written to establish.

There are two ways in which you may conduct a process of religious persuasion. You may appeal directly to the sources of spiritual conviction in the human mind, and endeavour to awaken the mood and present the thoughts, from which belief in Divine things becomes conscious and distinct. Or you may think it needless thus to begin at the beginning, and, taking the matter up at a later stage, may seek to ward off and remove objections by which the springs of faith have lost their action. The former method is creative and sympathetic; the latter is corrective and antagonistic. The one develops what is latent; the other suppresses what is obtrusive. The one rests in affirmation; the other negatives denial. By the rules of logic these two methods ought to be equivalents in validity; and in the treatment of any

Digitized by Google

subject purely intellectual they would actually be so. But religious faith, once broken by logical doubt, no logical refutation, it is probable, ever restored; so long as its inner ground remains unenlarged, so long as no new field of moral consciousness is opened, the mere dialectic discussion of data grown ineffectual must remain, we believe, without result. This, indeed, is only a consequence of the essential difference between a philosophy and a religion. In the apprehension of our Divine relations the logical faculty has but a secondary function,—to justify, to reconcile, to organise, to unfold certain given convictions; and is misapplied in the attempt to evoke or reinstate what is not there. Hence it is that, in many a mind, a mass of sceptic clouds, charged with thunders of denial, will cling steadfast to its cold heights against your keenest blasts of argument; and then, by some unnoticed change in the climate of the soul, will silently disperse. And hence also it is that men who have got rid of their own scepticism are so seldom able to shake other people's. To their old companions in doubt, they seem to have deserted their camp by a mere spring of caprice; and they are themselves disappointed, when they would account for their altered position, that they cannot trace the approach to it by a more intelligible path. They find themselves using—to the disgust of their associates—the very same evidences which used to affect them with *ennui* or contempt; and from the refutations which once appeared demonstrative some secret cause seems to have drawn all the pith away. The removal into a higher region of belief is seldom effected by retracing the logical staircase which brought us to a lower; but rather by flinging away some detaining weights, and passing with spontaneous ascent into congenial altitudes.

From insensibility to this fact, theologians greatly overrate the power of mere critical refutation directed against heretical doubt. They fancy that it must undo in the sceptic the process which it seems to render impossible to themselves; and when a book like Butler's *Analogy* appears, they regard the orthodox case as complete, and its triumph secure, except with the wilful or the stupid. The clerical pride in that ingenious work, the constancy with which its arguments are reproduced, the exultation with which its dilemma is presented to every opponent, curiously contrast with its utter inefficacy upon the minds it was intended to influence, and show how wide the chasm which separates the systematic divine from the troubled hearts he has to help out of their perplexities. Who ever heard of a Deist turned into Christian by reading the *Analogy?* or of a Christian brought by it into higher conceptions of his religion? Its whole force is expended in baffling simple Theism, or any Christianity that assumes it, and compelling you to take either more than

Digitized by Google

this or less than this,—to go on to orthodoxy or fall back on atheism. Equally admired as a logical feat by sceptics who strain at a gnat and dogmatists who swallow a camel, it hurts and browbeats every intermediate feeling; and even where it carries the intellect, does so by perplexing the moral sense, and reducing reverence to lower terms. That this fatal tendency belongs to the very essence of the argument, will appear from the barest sketch of its structure.

It is altogether an *argumentum ad hominem*, addressed, on behalf of ecclesiastical Christianity, to the believer in simple Theism. He is taken up on his own ground; and nothing more is asked from him at the outset than he is accustomed to allow, —that the world and human life evidence the existence and exemplify the moral government of an Infinite and Holy God. Go with me this one mile, says Butler, and I will compel you to go twain; resting with me at last in the assurance that the scheme of Redemption, as orthodox men understand it, has the same Author as the scheme of Creation. For not a questionable feature can you name in my theology which has not its exact counterpart in yours. It is needless for me to deny or explain the difficulties; it is enough that I retort them, and show that you also are in the same case. Do you object to the *miraculous* origin of Revelation?—I remind you of the miraculous origin of Nature. Are you repelled by the mystery of the Incarnation? —It is no darker than any other union of the Infinite with the Finite, of spiritual freedom with physical necessity. Are you shocked at the notion of hereditary corruption?—What say you, then, to the natural entail of disease and character? Is it incredible that the punishment of the guilty should be ransomed by anguish to the innocent?—I refer you to the whole history of human life, where all redemptions are vicarious, and the best men pay in sacrifice and sorrow for the deliverance of the worse. If, in the face of these difficulties, you can hold to your Natural Religion, why should they disturb your acceptance of a Revelation to which they still adhere? If the two schemes come from the same Author, what more likely than that they should exhibit the same features?

This argument, it is evident, far from relieving any perplexity, lets it lie in order to balance it by another. It duplicates the sense of painful embarrassment, by detecting the same repulsions in the sceptic's residuary belief which have already determined him to partial unbelief. So far as the reasoning succeeds, it is not by lightening objections in the ecclesiastical scale, but by weighting them more heavily in the theistical; and the only new feeling it can give to an opponent is this, that however ill he may think of other people's God, he has no reason to think

Digitized by Google

better of his own. If he is driven to accept a scheme of doctrine on this ground, he surrenders his higher sentiment to a lower necessity, and betrays the devoutness of his faith from shame at a logical reproach.

The cogency of this reasoning appears to us not less questionable than its piety. Granting even that every ugly feature found in the received "scheme of redemption" may be refound in the "scheme of creation," we submit that it occupies a totally different place in the two,—constituting the very text and substance of the one, and only, as it were, a foot-note in an appendix of the other. In the constitution of the world, those parts and arrangements which perplex our sense of the Divine justice and goodness are insignificant exceptions in a grand and righteous whole; and the gloom they would occasion, did they stand alone, is lost in a "more exceeding glory." They do not speak the essence and spirit of the system: they are the silent enigmas that lie out of relation to it; and are superable by faith only from their relative unimportance. It is otherwise with the doctrines by which the creeds offend the moral sense and the natural pieties:—the hereditary curse of sin and ruin;—the eternal punishment of helpless incapacity;—the conveyance of an alien holiness by imputation, and the transfer of an infinite penalty from an offending race to a saving God;—these are no exceptional incidents in the orthodox scheme, but its organic members, its very plan and life, the only thing it has to offer in exemplification of the character of God. These are not the "difficulties" of its "revelation," but the whole of it; if these are not revealed,—its advocates will tell you,—nothing is revealed; and a theology that omits them wants "the essentials" of the Christian faith. Thus the darkness, the negations, the sorrows of Natural Religion are made, not simply to reappear in this Christianity, but to constitute it and be the only soul it has; while the illuminated side of theism suffers eclipse and falls into shadow as a "non-essential." This inversion in the proportion of light to gloom on passing from the one system to the other appears to us utterly to vitiate the conclusion from their Analogy; indeed, in strictness, to destroy the Analogy itself.

Nor is this the only fallacy involved in Butler's reasoning. His fundamental maxim, that "Revelation and nature, having the same Author, may be expected to *exhibit the same features*," may be admitted, until he adds, "and *therefore to contain the same difficulties*." There is, we suppose, *some* limit to the resemblance which may be reasonably looked for between the two systems. No one's anticipations would be satisfied by their being perfectly alike,—each, in its disclosures, an exact *fac-simile* of the other. And if so,—if the presumption be irresistible in

Digitized by Google

favour of some difference in the midst of the visible affinity,—where should we fitly seek for the lines of divergence? Surely the very antithesis, "*Natural*"—"*Revealed*," is an index to the true seat of contrast. Precisely what Nature hides, is Inspiration given to unveil; it is where the one is silent that the other has to speak; and only in so far as the first leaves us in the dimness of perplexity does the second vouchsafe its light. The "difficulties," therefore, of unaided Theism are exactly what we should *not* expect to find over again in a religion sent to our rescue; and just in proportion as we do so, does the gift forfeit its character as a "Revelation," and remain undifferenced from our prior darkness. To insist that the universe and the gospel come from the same Author, and to forget that they contemplate different ends, supplementary of each other, is to do violence to all laws of rational presumption.

We are far from saying that there is any thing inconceivable in a partial revelation, which shall leave many obscurities not cleared up: nor dare we prescribe, by any *à-priori* rule, how much must be given, and how much left. We only say that it is the essence of revelation to dissipate darkness; that whatever it does, be it little or be it much, must be of this kind; that, though it may let old perplexities lie unsolved, it contradicts its nature if it introduces new ones; and that as its very idea and aim is to give the key and method of the Divine administration to those who were in danger of missing its spirit amid conflicting details, the antecedent probability is extreme in favour of a luminous simplicity, and against its reproducing the identical riddles on which it takes compassion.

We well know that to question Butler's perfection is, in the eyes of churchmen, little short of the sin against the Holy Ghost. We can honestly say that it is not without trying hard to believe in him, and not without admiring recognition of his merits as an ethical thinker, that we find his theology, as expressed in his great work, oppressive to the religious feeling and unsound in its logical elaboration. This being the case, it is not surprising that Dr. Mansel's book gives us just the same experience: for it is essentially an adaptation of the same argument to the altered conditions of modern philosophy. The chief difference is the following. Butler concerned himself with the outward constitution of things in both the spheres which he compared,—with the actual laws and arrangements of the world on the one hand, the organic facts and system of redemption on the other. For every thing apparently objectionable in the latter he was ready with some corresponding ill look in the former; and having set the deformities in equilibrium, there he left them to cancel each other. How far they are real or not is indifferent to his reason-

Digitized by Google

ing, which dwells only on their parallelism, not on their intrinsic validity. He no further accounts for them than by referring to the small measure of our present faculty as applied to the immensity of the Divine scheme; and supposes that they would disappear, even from our view, were our horizon enlarged, and a wider survey obtained over the relations of things. Dr. Mansel, on the other hand, rests nothing on the objective analogy of natural and supernatural arrangements, and every thing on the subjective incapacity of the intellect for dealing with either: his plea is, not that God has set similar puzzles in the world as in the gospel, but that man brings the same logical disqualification to both. It matters not, therefore, in his argument, what the particular adjustments of nature or doctrines of Scripture may be: change them ever so much, on this side or on that, they would suit us no better. Our difficulties are not in the things, but in ourselves;—not matters of degree, brooding heavily here and vanishing there, and variable with our opportunities; but, being carried about with us in the very structure of our faculties, are constant for every possible system, and never short of irremediable contradiction. That the rationalistic critique of the orthodox faith is successful in finding insuperable inconsistencies, is not denied; but you have only, it is said, to apply the same logical experiment to any religious philosophy whatsoever, and it will equally disappear under the process. Thought lies under a fatal disability with regard to Divine things, and is doomed to frame its religion out of hopelessly incompatible beliefs.

There is something very tempting to a reasoner in a principle of this kind,—the discovery of a subjective incompetence. It does great execution on very easy terms. It saves all trouble of external reconnoitring and comparison of evidence, and serves for every case alike. It despatches all enemies with one instrument: a sort of unicorn polemic that, like the beast in the book of Daniel, "pushes" impartially against all the cardinal points. Dr. Mansel, accordingly, by a single operation, clears the field of all opponents at once; he has only to wave his metaphysical wand, and pronounce his universal incantation, and they turn into phantoms, and disappear into his appendix;—a miscellaneous prison-house, where all evil spirits are reserved for judgment. There would seem to be some little difference between the springs of doubt in ethical minds like Theodore Parker's or Francis Newman's, and in mystical, like Bruno and Schelling,—between the akosmism of Spinoza and the atheism of Comte,—between the historical scepticism of Strauss or Baur and the speculative dialectic of Hegel,—between the business-like rationalism of the Socini and the impersonal theology of Schleiermacher: and he indeed must be a fortunate divine who has found an answer that

Digitized by Google

will serve for all. The danger of such a comprehensive refutation always is, lest it should inadvertently include yourself. It is difficult to set so large an appetite to work, and stand yourself out of reach of its voracity. And we have serious fears that Dr. Mansel must sooner or later fall a victim to the hunger of his own logic.

The mighty spell which is to paralyse all heretical critics at a stroke is no other than Sir William Hamilton's principle, that the Infinite cannot be known, because to know is to discriminate, and what is discriminated is finite; or, again, to state the matter in another form, that the Absolute cannot be known, because to know is to apprehend relations, and what is related is not absolute. The rule may be expressed in the terms of various other antitheses: that thought, as such, can deal only with that which is *conditioned*, and which is *plural*; and must therefore find unconditioned and unitary being inaccessible. This inability to think or apprehend, except by relation and difference, is assumed to be a human limitation of faculty, a provincial incompetency, a negation of mental light and power. And the realm from which it excludes us is precisely, we are told, the religious realm: for God is that infinite, absolute, unconditioned unity, the knowledge of whom contradicts the very nature of thought. Hence there can be no philosophy of religion. Every attempt to construct such a system has to substitute spurious counterfeits of the genuine Divine essentials: for positive "Infinitude," the simply *Indefinite;* for the "Absolute" *per se*, the mere ground-term of a Relation; for the "Unconditioned," the conditioning antecedent. Not only are these ambitious impostures in contradiction with the legitimate originals (the "indefinite," for instance, being susceptible of increase, while the "Infinite" is not); but they are themselves only illusions,—negations of thought rather than thoughts,—the mental background on which our positive conceptions rise and display themselves. No ingenuity can avail to rescue us from this inherent disqualification: no spasmodic spring can carry us over the chasm that parts our intellect from all divine knowledge: no cautious steps and steady eye can find a bottom to the cleft between. A critique of religion is impossible to a mind which is condemned by its constitution to a faith composed of contradictions.

In order to show the different forms in which these inevitable contradictions crop up, our author reviews, first, the metaphysical systems which form themselves, like Spinoza's and Hegel's, by evolution from the supreme terms of thought,—the Infinite, the Absolute, the Causal,—as their data, and endeavour from this ontological beginning to find a deductive path into and through the phenomenal world of nature and humanity: and

Digitized by Google

then, the Psychological systems which, inversely, commence from the laws of human consciousness,—the sense of dependence, the belief of origination, the feeling of obligation,—and attempt thence to explore a passage into the hyperphysical and divine world. In the former, the finite can never attain to its rights or at all emerge from the pantheistic whole; nor can any predicates be attached to the Infinite: for, on the principle that *omnis determinatio est negatio*, it parts with its essence by gaining an attribute, and, unless it is to lose its affirmative reality, must for ever remain the blank of Being. In the latter order of systems, on the other hand, we can never escape from the finite: if we wait for logical stepping-stones to the other side, we shall wait for ever, and have no resource but to lodge in an atheistic world; and if, rather than this, we convey into a presumed Infinite our ideas of Personality, Intellect, and Character, we do but deny the essence we mean to enrich, and in the same breath affirm limitation and disclaim it. The self-destructive nature of the fundamental conceptions of rational theology is thus exhibited:

"These three conceptions,—the Cause, the Absolute, the Infinite,—all equally indispensable, do they not imply contradiction to each other, when viewed in conjunction, as attributes of one and the same being? A Cause cannot, as such, be absolute; the Absolute cannot, as such, be a cause. The cause, as such, exists only in relation to its effect; the cause is a cause of the effect; the effect is an effect of the cause. On the other hand, the conception of the Absolute implies a possible existence out of all relation. We attempt to escape from this apparent contradiction, by introducing the idea of succession in time. The Absolute exists first by itself, and afterwards becomes a Cause. But here we are checked by the third conception, that of the Infinite. How can the Infinite become that which it was not from the first? If causation is a possible mode of existence, that which exists without causing is not infinite, that which becomes a cause has passed beyond its former limits. Creation at any particular moment of time being thus inconceivable, the philosopher is reduced to the alternative of pantheism, which pronounces the effect to be mere appearance, and merges all real existence in the cause. The validity of this alternative will be examined presently.

"Meanwhile, to return for a moment to the supposition of a true causation. Supposing the Absolute to become a cause, it will follow that it operates by means of free-will and consciousness. For a necessary cause cannot be conceived as absolute and infinite. If necessitated by something beyond itself, it is thereby limited by a superior power; and if necessitated by itself, it has in its own nature a necessary relation to its effect. The act of causation must therefore be voluntary; and volition is only possible in a conscious being. But consciousness, again, is only conceivable as a relation. There must be a conscious subject and an object of which he is conscious. The sub-

Digitized by Google

ject is a subject to the object; the object is an object to the subject; and neither can exist by itself as the Absolute. This difficulty, again, may be for the moment evaded, by distinguishing between the Absolute as related to another and the Absolute as related to itself. The Absolute, it may be said, may possibly be conscious, provided it is only conscious of itself. But this alternative is, in ultimate analysis, no less self-destructive than the other. For the object of consciousness, whether a mode of the subject's existence or not, is either created in and by the act of consciousness, or has an existence independent of it. In the former case, the object depends upon the subject, and the subject alone is the true absolute. In the latter case, the subject depends upon the object, and the object alone is the true absolute. Or, if we attempt a third hypothesis, and maintain that each exists independently of the other, we have no absolute at all, but only a pair of relatives; for coexistence, whether in consciousness or not, is itself a relation" (p. 47).

The general conclusion which Dr. Mansel draws from this *Streit der Facultäten* is hardly what the premises would lead us to expect. Our idea of the "Infinite," being merely negative, would seem to be the index to no positive reality. Our idea of "Personality," being a mere reflection of our limited consciousness, is declared to be incapable of application to a nature not finite. Yet we are assured (p. 89) that it is "our duty to think of God as personal; and it is our duty to believe that He is infinite," though the two conceptions contradict each other. The notion of "Infinitude" is at once "inadmissible" in theology, and yet "indispensable." Nor is this humiliating necessity of compounding a faith out of contradictories at all peculiar to our *Religion*. All the fundamental postulates of thought,—Time, Space, Substance, Power,—are in the same plight; introducing us to entities which we cannot harmonise with our experience of phenomena. In all these cases nothing is left to us but to accept the ontological ideas as *true relatively to us*,—given forms of *our* thought,—but to beware of regarding them as valid for things in themselves, or for any point of view beyond our own. Whether they do or do not represent realities as they are, we cannot tell: but as we are imprisoned within them, they are *regulative* truth for our minds, though having no claim to the character of *speculative* truth, imaging what lies in the outer daylight of the universe beyond our dreams.

Our readers will at once recognise in this sketch a revival of the principles of Kant; who, by resolving into subjective conditions all our ontological and perceptive assumptions, left the intellect in idealistic insulation, and blew up every bridge by which thought could pass to the mainland of real Being. Dr. Mansel, however, is more thorough-going still. Kant, it is well

Digitized by Google

known, recovered in his treatise on the Practical Reason the ground he had abandoned in his analysis of the Speculative: and authorised the resumption, as presuppositions of conscience, of the very faiths, in moral freedom, responsibility, and absolute divine law, which no dialectic was able to guarantee. Our author complains of this as an inconsequence; and carrying his own scepticism steadily through, involves Morals with Theology in the same sentence of mere subjectivity, rendering their ideas inapplicable, except in condescension to our incapacities, to any sphere beyond the human.* We may indeed—perhaps must—*speak* of an Absolute Morality: but the phrase involves a contradiction in terms; for the moment we try any ethical conception upon an Infinite nature, it is swallowed up and disappears. Emotion and change, such as are inseparable from disapproval or compassion, from either free forgiveness or conditional reconciliation, and from openness to prayer, are incompatible with immutable self-identity: yet, on the other hand, the alternative suppositions, of an ethical neutrality or an optionless and necessitated justice, no less impose limits on the perfection of Being. On this side also, our author contends, all religious belief is necessarily a tissue of contradictions, protected only by the existence of equal contradictions in any scheme of unbelief. The conclusion from the whole is, that, in our natural Theism, we must hold to *both* of the incompatible terms, the existence of the Infinite that can have no predicates, and the truth of the Finite predicates he cannot have; and that, bringing this state of mind to the scheme of Redemption, we are in no condition to cast the first stone at its seeming inconsistencies, but are bound to content ourselves with estimating its evidences, without attempting a critique of its doctrines. Taken at their worst, they are as good as ours.

This line of thought, we must confess, appears to us even painfully precarious. Suppose, for argument's sake, that we grant the premises, and say, with Sir W. Hamilton, that only the Finite can be given us in thought; that the Infinite is for us only a negation,—a subjective inability to think; and that relative conceptions, on such a subject, are equivalent to ignor-

* It is with great diffidence that, speaking from memory alone, we call in question a statement respecting Kant, repeatedly made or implied by so studious and careful a writer as Dr. Mansel. But we know of no authority for the following representation, and cannot persuade ourselves that Kant has any where exposed himself to so reasonable a criticism: "Kant unquestionably went too far, in asserting that things in themselves *are not* as they appear to our faculties; the utmost that his premises could warrant him in asserting is, that we cannot tell whether they are so or not" (p. 348). Dr. Mansel produces no citation, and affords no means of verification. Certainly, if Kant ever said such a thing, he not only "went too far," but fell into variance with the whole spirit of his philosophy.

Digitized by Google

ance. How far do these assumptions bear out Dr. Mansel's conclusion, that we must throw ourselves on Revelation? They establish conditions which make all revelation impossible.

Let us allow for the moment that, by the constitution of our faculties, we have (as our author says) a legitimate belief in the *existence* of the Infinite, but a total inability to attach any predicates to this subject. How can such a Being, so cut off from all possible access to our minds, *reveal* himself to us? As well might you say that Silence can make a speech. An existence without predicates is a non-existence: as Dr. Mansel himself admits, "pure being is" *to us* "pure nothing" (p. 328). That negation should send a message to nescience appears not readily conceivable; nor can we imagine in what the "evidences" of such a communication could consist.

But do the premises really guarantee to us even the bare *existence* of the Infinite? We cannot see how. The only ground for this faith which Dr. Mansel ever presents is, "that our whole consciousness is compassed about with restrictions, which we are ever striving to pass, and ever failing in the effort" (p. 121). But the bird in the cage and the captive in his cell learn nothing, by their vain efforts, of the world beyond. It is a marvellous thing to affirm that every incompetency implies an Infinitude. Our mental limits are evidence of no more than that the intellect is less than the intelligible. If, moreover, we are capable of discovering, with Hamilton and Mansel, that this "Infinite," which we are to endow with "existence," is but a subjective negation, the mocking shadow of our own impotence, we lose every ground for holding to its objective reality. The very discovery itself consists in nothing else than the detection of untrustworthiness in the belief. What does it amount to but this, —that our cognitive faculties are constructed without provision for any thing beyond phenomenal knowledge,—that we are made exclusively for the finite, not for the infinite? And this is only to say that, whether there be an Infinite or not, is a question beyond our affirmation or denial.

Turn the matter which way you will, this much is certain: to a mind disqualified in its structure for a "Philosophy of the Infinite," there can be made no Revelation of the Infinite; in older form of phrase, if natural religion be impossible, *through incapacity in the subject*, so is supernatural. Religious ignorance arising from defect in the attainable evidence, or from an undeveloped state of the faculties, may be remedied by supplementary information or an awakening discipline. But if the very instrument of intelligence carries its own darkness with it, and is fated ever to turn its blind side to God, then it stands similarly related to all possible media of expression, and there are no terms on

Digitized by Google

which Divine light can be had. Where the receptive power is at fault, it is vain to multiply and intensify communication: as well might you hang a blind asylum with chandeliers, and expect that, though the daylight was useless, the brilliancy at night would tell. If there are no predicates of God assured to us by Reason, or only such as contradict each other and open the way to opposing possibilities; if we have only such knowledge (?) of Him as either may or may not represent Him as He is (p. 146); if we can affirm nothing of Him that might not with equal reason be denied;—there are no discriminative marks by which He and His agency may be recognised: for the unknown has no characteristics. Our incompetency extends therefore further than Dr. Mansel contemplates,—to the signs and evidences of Revelation, as well as its contents; and the paralysis of Natural Religion is the suppression of Revealed.

Our author's logic, then, in mowing down its thistle-field, inconsiderately mows off its own legs. He cuts away the only supports on which religious thought can rest or move; and nothing short of an unqualified ontological scepticism is in agreement with his premises. We cannot in the least discover *why*, on his principles, we are to believe *either* of the two contradictories which he requires us to hold in combination,—that God is infinite, that God is personal. He disparages the sources of cognition from which we receive these propositions, yet keeps their allegations on his books. If the witnesses are untrustworthy, why let their testimony fix the main points of the case? The "infinite" being unmeaning for us, and the "personal" unmeaning in God, what title can they show to joint hold on our belief? No intellectual intuition, no consciousness, no legitimate inference, can assure us of either; where, then, are their credentials? To these questions we find no reply except that disbelief, if we choose to try it, will bring no logical gain. This is a good argument for a Pyrrhonist, who would maintain us in indeterminate equipoise, but is inconvertible to the purposes of the Christian philosopher and divine. The habit of dealing with derivative steps of thought is not favourable to a firm grasp of the primary data; and we cannot help thinking that Dr. Mansel's own mind is not clear with regard to the ultimate roots of religious belief. He cleverly pursues and breaks the track of many a system of erratic metaphysics; but, fascinated with the hunt of delusion and incompetency, he pushes the rout too far, and, as it seems to us, rides over the brink of the solid world, and falls into the abysses.

And now, having argued the matter from our author's premises, we must confess and justify our discontent with them. We cannot admit the doctrine of the religious incompetency of the human faculties; and the wide concurrence in it of schools

Digitized by Google

apparently opposite,—of Mill and Comte, of Hamilton and Mansel,—will hereafter, we conceive, be looked upon as no less curious a phenomenon than the ovation with which, in the last century, the Critical Philosophy was carried off along the most divergent paths of thought. Undeterred by the fashion of the day and the influence of authoritative names, we do not hesitate to believe with Cousin, that there is a legitimate "passage from pyschology to ontology," and to protest against the paradox that human intelligence, in its highest exercise, can only mock us with impossibilities and contradictions.

To put the matter into the shortest formula, let us say, we admit the *relative character* of human thought as a psychological fact; we deny it as an ontological disqualification. All acts of the mind, whether creative or apprehensive, are undoubtedly discriminative, a procedure from a less to a more determinate state. As self-conscious, they carry with them the distinction between subject and object; and as directed upon this, and not on that, they cut out a definite from an indefinite. To conceive, to know, to reflect, is in every case to deal exclusively with difference and relation; mental action is dualistic, not monistic. So far we are agreed.

Is, then, this *relativity* an incompetency or a qualification for thinking? a cognitive limitation, or a cognitive power? Our author, following Sir W. Hamilton, treats it as a provincial restriction imposed upon our nature, barring us from escape into the realm of real rather than seeming knowledge, and under the show of science dooming us to nescience. Is there any plea for such disparagement and distrust beyond the argument which, in parallel case, Hegel wittily attributed to Kant: "It cannot be true, because *we* think it"? What reason is there to suppose that in natures higher than ours there is another sort of knowledge in which nothing is differenced, and even the knower is not separated from the known? And if such a condition of being existed, would it legitimately rank as *more* intelligent or *less* intelligent than ours? And again, where is the field of otherwise possible knowledge from which this relativity excludes us? Drop the limit, and what new reaches of being do you bring within the intellectual horizon? Nothing surely can be more arbitrary than to treat the very essence of a faculty as the negation of faculty, and complain of the eye as enabling us to do nothing but see, and condemning us to see only what is visible. That we cannot think except by differencing, means only that we cannot know where there is nothing to be known, or that we cannot use a function without having it. If intelligence consists in distinguishing, how can distinguishing be an incompetency to understand? And does the "competency" of the most perfect intel-

Digitized by Google

lect consist in this,—that it dispenses with differences, and sees all things to be equally true, and truth itself identical with falsehood?

But, it will be said, this relative character of knowledge at all events limits you to the finite, and precludes access to God as Infinite. On the contrary, we submit that relative apprehension is always and necessarily of two terms together: if of sound, then also of silence; if of succession, then also of duration; if of the finite, then also of the infinite. It is the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος* of Spinoza, of Schelling, of Hegel, of all monistic speculative systems, that they set up in isolated supremacy one of two inseparable data of thought, and then endeavour to educe the other out of it; and Dr. Mansel falls, we think, into the same snare. He strains after an Infinite that shall exclude the Finite; an Absolute that shall emerge from all Relation; a Causality that shall be pure of all conditions. If Theism were staked on his finding such things, his despair of it would be natural enough. For these conceptions, which he denies to be on speaking terms, are in each case Siamese twins, between which any affectation of estrangement cannot fail to be highly inconvenient. They come into existence before our thought together, and have their living meaning only *in pairs;* one of the two giving us the constant and ontological ground, the other the phenomenal manifestation. The attempt to think away the finite from the presence of the infinite, or *vice versâ*, must inevitably fail; and of the two schemes to which the attempt gives rise, viz. that which says "entities only can be known," and that which says "phenomena only can be known," both are to be unhesitatingly rejected. Two other possibilities remain, viz. the Idealism which, treating all "relation" as a subjective economy of ours, pronounces that we know *neither;* and the Realism which, taking relations in the mind as exponents of relations out, decides that we know *both*. It is on this last alone that, in our view, a sound philosophy can take its stand.

The position taken up against this doctrine rests on the distinction between positive and negative ideas. Of the finite, it is said we have a positive idea; of the infinite, except as the negative of this, we have none at all: the one, therefore, is the exponent of an objective reality, the other is only a subjective incapacity. The term which is given to us by experience is reliable: its concomitant, which is supplied in thought, is an empty form. In every case of relation between presumed entity and perceived phenomenon,—Space and position,—Time and succession,—Substance and quality,—Infinite and finite,—the more ambitious term is unaccredited,—a mere metaphysical impostor; putting on the airs of demonstration and universal validity, and pretending to hold good for all possible worlds; but, by this very mark, betraying its close confinement to our own mind as the mere

Digitized by Google

shape and shadow of our faculty. So far does Dr. Mansel carry this Kantian Idealism, that he pronounces all judgments insecure and personal in proportion as they are self-evident and, like the exact sciences, exhibit the characteristics of Universality and Necessity (p. 203). Now we will not enter here on the question whether those pairs of ideas are or are not valid beyond the enclosure of our nature; *that* falls into the general controversy with the Idealist. But this we venture to affirm, that, valid or invalid, the two terms of each pair must stand or fall *together*; and that, except by an arbitrary *coup-de-tête*, one cannot be taken and the other left. Both are given to us,—*e.g.* a limited figure and the boundless Space from which it is cut out,—in one and the same mental act, and are equally secured by the veracity, or vitiated by the unveracity, of our intellectual constitution. There can be no objection to call the one "positive" and the other "negative," provided it be understood that *each* is so with regard to the other, and that the relation is convertible; the finite, for instance, being the negative of the infinite, not less than the infinite of the finite. If more than this be meant, if the word "negative" is immovably fixed on the ontological term, as a disparagement of its trustworthiness and an assertion that it is obtained by mere thinking-away of sterling elements, then we dispute the doctrine as false alike to psychology and to logic; and with Dr. M'Cosh, whom our author unsatisfactorily criticises (p. 333), contend for a "positive" idea of the infinite. The attempt to resolve this idea into that of the "indefinite," does but mock the feeling of every precise thinker. That is "indefinite," to which we know no end; that is "infinite" which we know to have no end. The belief in the one is attainable by simply thinking limits away; the belief in the other rests on the positive deposition of our own faculties, which must be either taken at their word or dismissed as cheats.

It is perfectly true that of the Infinite, whether of Space, Time, or other mode of Being, we can form no mental *representation*; and that, when we try to do so, we can only resort to a vain stretching of the finite till we are tired and give it up. We suspect that this is what is meant when the idea is identified with a mere inability to think; for certainly many of the "contradictions" charged upon it are simply cases of baffled imagination. But it is no objection to either the reality or the legitimacy of a thought, that it is not of a kind to be brought before "the mind's *eye*." We *believe*, though we cannot *conceive*, the infinitude of space and time: and these beliefs take their place and perform their proper intellectual function in processes of rigorous scientific reasoning; not only without vitiating the result, but with indispensable aid to its true evolution. If this is not a

Digitized by Google

"*thinking*" the infinite,—this letting it into a procedure of thought with operative power on the final product,—we know not what thinking is.

We confess a total insensibility to most of the alarming perplexities which our author endeavours to fix on the Idea of the Infinite. They all arise out of the spurious Spinozistic demand, that this idea shall be kept out of relation to any thing, and the false assumption that, unless this is done, the idea is sacrificed. Except in personal argument with opponents making this demand, there is no reason for giving way to it. No religious truth or moral interest requires us to identify God with any infinitude but that which stands in ontological relation to the finite. When we are asked whether, in creating the world, God increased the quantity of being, and are reminded that, if He did, infinitude received addition, and if He did not, the finite world is nothing at all,—the consequences do not in either case distress us as might be expected: an Infinitude that supplies its own completion was potentially without defect; and a world that manifests an Infinitude other than its own atones for its nonentity. As well might you ask whether the sun, on first appearing, added any thing to the extension of the universe; because, if he did, it was not infinite before; if he did not, he could have no size. These puzzles (which, be it remembered, remain after Revelation precisely what they were before) arise in great measure from the application of quantitative ideas to qualitative existence, and the attempt to solve all problems of genesis and change by the formulas of addition and subtraction. In order to be added together or to limit one another, objects must be homogeneous and must be magnitudes; and to speak of "quantity of *being*" in the abstract, or to discuss such a combination as God + World, appears to us not less unmeaning than to ask about the temperature of duration, or to debate whether sleep + dream is larger than sleep alone. In forgetfulness of this principle, our author pronounces the coexistence of the Divine attributes inconceivable without contradiction, because involving a plurality of infinitudes, side by side. If the attributes were not each *sui generis*, and if they wanted room, the remark would be true. But if, according to Spinoza's rule, "thinking is not bounded by body, or body by thinking," there is no need for heterogeneous attributes to become finite in order to coexist.

These things being borne in mind, it is truly astonishing to find Dr. Mansel treating as perfectly parallel mysteries the coexistence of Attributes in the Divine substance, and the coexistence of Persons in the Divine Unity. For the cases differ precisely in that which turns the scale from possibility to impossibility. No two *attributes* of the same substance are alike; there is no

Digitized by Google

tangential relation between them; therefore no mutual interference. But with *personalities* it is otherwise; as so many distinct *subjects* they are generically the same, with differences only attributive; and are therefore mutually exclusive and limit each other. It is only by attenuating the conception of personality till it melts away into that of attribute or function, that this doctrine becomes at all presentable in thought; and so, to the very relation which our author adduces as the counterpart of its contradiction, we habitually resort to relieve it of its mystery. In like manner, Dr. Mansel's remark that the doctrine of the God-Man is neither more nor less perplexing than any other coexistence of a finite object with the infinite overlooks the real seat of the difficulty, which lies not in the relation of magnitude between the two natures predicated, but in the fact that both of them are *Personal* essences,—the second Person in the Godhead and the "perfect man" Jesus,—and therefore, by the rule of mutual exclusion in such cases, incapable of union in the same subject. It is a bold paradox to assert that the tormenting and intricate subtleties of the Eutychian and Monophysite controversies concerned a matter no harder to understand than the coexistence of the finite Moon with the infinite Space.

On the whole, then, we cannot follow Dr. Mansel in his scepticism respecting the natural springs of religion in the human mind; and if we could, we should feel that the possibility of revelation was gone too. We have entire faith in the veracity, and in the consistency, of the reports given in by our highest faculties; and think it possible, even within our segment of a life, to trace their convergence towards one Divine and Holy Reality. The causal instinct of the intellect, the solemn suspicions of the conscience, the ideal passion of the imagination, the dependent self-renunciation of the affections, are all, we believe, so many lines of attraction to the same Infinite Object. And however numerous the aspects under which that transcendent Being may present Himself to the different sides of our nature, we see no reason to doubt their consonance, or to despair of the noble and pious attempt to exhibit them in harmony. Nor do we think it should be a congenial task, for a divine versed in philosophy, to enlist his skill in the defeat of this attempt,—in widening the discrepancies, reducing the approximations, and making the most of the failures of the religious reason. We have no tenderness towards the metaphysical pantheism,—from Spinoza to Hegel,—which Dr. Mansel criticises in his earlier lectures. But we should give it up to him with more satisfaction, did he not, in his doctrine of the Infinite, appropriate its chief feature, and so, in the very act of putting it to death, transfer to himself its most fatal weapon. The effect of his

Digitized by Google

essential sympathy with these systems in their conception of the problem to be proposed, shows itself especially when he ceases to contend with them, and addresses himself to the *moral* difficulties of faith, the doctrine of forgiveness, the grounds of prayer, the possibility of character in God. His treatment of these great subjects makes us forget the philosopher and recognise the divine: inventing imaginary difficulties, and removing them by fictitious solutions; implying slighter acquaintance than in the previous discussions with the literature of the subject; and missing, as it seems to us, the essential bases of ethical theory.

The general spirit of this book is scholarly and liberal; and probably the deviations from this tone are involuntary and intellectual merely. But there are examples of controversial unfairness, which, though sanctioned by usage, we deeply lament to see. In notes giving some account of the works of Strauss and of Baur, Dr. Mansel thinks it allowable to bring together, as an anthology of absurdities, all the extreme results and most amazing hints which the Hegelian dialectic of these writers supplies, without noticing the fact that their philosophy is an insignificant accident, which, if entirely removed or replaced by a different scheme, would leave the mass of their historical criticism unaffected. The consequence is, that these notes present a gross caricature, and leave an impression utterly false of two writers, both of whom, in spite of great aberrations of ingenuity, have produced an ineffaceable impression on Christian theology; and one has furnished contributions of extraordinary value to the solution of the grandest of historical problems. How decidedly we are opposed to their main theories, our habitual readers well know; and from their philosophy we stand at a greater distance probably than Dr. Mansel. But no orthodoxy can consecrate the spirit of polemic detraction, or excuse a scholar from recognising scholarship and a Christian from observing justice. A writer, however, who thinks (p. 247) that Christianity is all lost, if once you admit the slightest human element in the teaching of Christ, belongs to a stage of theological opinion at which genial admiration and judicial estimates of modern critical learning are hardly possible. Few things, indeed, are more striking in this volume than the contrast between the acuteness and refinement of its metaphysics, and the purely popular and elementary character of its biblical ideas.

Digitized by Google

ART. X.—PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

On the Electoral Statistics of the Counties and Boroughs in England and Wales during the Twenty-five Years from the Reform Act of 1832 *to the Present Time.** By William Newmarch, one of the Honorary Secretaries of the Statistical Society. Read before the Statistical Society, 16th June 1857, and printed in the Journal of that Society. Vol. XX. Parts II. and III.

We shall not be expected to discuss in a party spirit the subject of Parliamentary Reform. It has never been objected to the NATIONAL REVIEW that it is a party organ; and even periodicals which have long been such, scarcely now discuss that subject in a party spirit. Both Whigs and Conservatives are pledged to do something, and neither as a party have agreed what they would do. We would attempt to give an impartial criticism of the electoral system which now exists, and some indication of the mode in which we think that its defects should be amended. It is possible, we fear, that our article may be long, and that our criticism on existing arrangements may appear tedious. But a preliminary understanding is requisite; unless we are agreed as to what is to be desired, we cannot hope to agree as to what is to be done: a clear knowledge of the disease must precede the remedy. In business, no ingenuity of detail can compensate for indistinctness of design.

There is much that may be said against the Reform Act of 1832; but, on the whole, it has been successful. It is a commonplace to speak of the legislative improvements of the last twenty-five years, and it would be tedious to enumerate them. Free trade, a new colonial policy, the improved poor-law, the encumbered-estate act in Ireland, the tithe commutation, municipal reform, the tentative but most judicious support of education, are only some of the results of the reform of the House of Commons. Scarcely less important is the improvement which the Reform Bill has introduced into the general tone of our administration; our executive has become purer, more considerate, and more humane, and it would be difficult to show that in its ordinary and beneficial action it is much weaker. Nor is this all. So much of agreement in opinion as we see around us is perhaps unexampled in a political age; and it is the more singular, because the English nation is now considerably less homogeneous

* We cannot speak too highly of these most admirable statistics. No pains have been spared to make them complete, and extreme judgment has been shown in the selection. When it is not otherwise stated, all our electoral statistics are from this source.

Digitized by Google

in its social structure than it was once. The prodigious growth of manufactures and trade has created a new world in the north of England, which contrasts with the south in social circumstances and social habits: at no former time was there such a difference as there now is between Lancashire and Devonshire. It is impossible not to ascribe this agreement to the habit of national discussion which the Reform Act has fostered. The scattered argument, the imperfect but perpetual influence of the press and society, have made us, perhaps even to an excessive degree, unanimous. Possibly we are all too much disposed to catch the voice which is in the air. Still, a little too much concord is better than a little too much discord. It is a striking result, that our present constitution has educed from such dissimilar elements so much of harmony.

Beneficial, however, as are these incidental results of the Reform Bill, they are not the most important parts of its success. This measure has, to a considerable extent, been successful in its *design*. The object which its framers had in view was, to transfer the predominant influence in the state from certain special classes to the general aggregate of fairly instructed men. It is not perhaps very easy to prove upon paper that this has been, at least in a very great degree, effected. The most difficult thing to establish by argument is an evident fact of observation. There are no statistics of opinion to which we can refer, there is no numerical comparison which will establish the accordance of parliamentary with social opinion. We must trust to our eyes and ears, to the vague but conclusive evidence of events. If, indeed, public opinion had always been as unanimous as it now is, we should have some difficulty in ascertaining the fact. When every body thinks the same, there is no saying which is the stronger party. But during the last twenty-six years there have been many periods at which public opinion was much divided and strongly excited. The great legislative changes which have been mentioned were not effected without long and animated party dissension. The policy of a great country like this has continually required the determination of critical questions, both at home and abroad; its ramified affairs have been a never-failing source of controverted topics. What would have been the sign if the expressed opinion of Parliament had been contrary to the distinct opinion of the country? In the present state of the country we should not have been long in learning it. We should have had political meetings, not of one class but all classes, clouds of petitions from every quarter, endless articles in newspapers; the cry would only have died away when the obnoxious decision was reversed, and the judgment of Parliament submitted itself to the will of the nation. The inclination of the House of Commons is evidently

Digitized by Google

not to oppose the country. On the contrary, we all know the power, the undue power, possessed by that part of the press whose course is supposed to indicate what is likely to be the common opinion. So far from our legislators dissenting too often from the expressed judgment of the country, they are but too much swayed by indications of what it probably will be. The history of our great legislative changes, of itself shows that the opinion of Parliament is, in the main, coincident with that of the nation. Parliament and the country were converted at the same time. Even the history of the corn-law agitation, which is often referred to as indicating the contrary, proves this conspicuously. It succeeded almost at the moment that impartial people, who had no interests on either side, were convinced that it ought to succeed. Mr. Cobden liked to relate, that when he first began to dream of agitating the question, a most experienced nobleman observed to him, "Repeal the Corn-laws! you will repeal the monarchy as soon." The noble lord was right in estimating the tenacity and intensity of the protectionist creed; but he did not know, and Mr. Cobden did, the power of plain argument on the common mass of plain men, and the certainty that *their* opinion, if really changed, would suffice to change the course of our legislation, even in opposition to strong aristocratic influence and very rooted prejudice. It has been said that Sir Robert Peel owed his success in life to "being converted at the conversion of the average man;" the same influences acted on his mind that acted on the minds of most other people throughout the nation, and in much the same measure. He was, therefore, converted to new views at the same time that most other people were converted to them. The same may be said of the present Parliament. Nobody would call the reformed House of Commons original; it is never in advance of the higher order of cultivated thought: but every one would agree that it is preëminently considerate, well-judging, and convincible; and when people say this, they mean that its opinions commonly coincide with their own.

In no respect is the reality of the accordance in opinion between Parliament and the nation so convincingly shown as in the sympathy of Parliament with the eccentricities of public opinion. We are constantly acknowledging that "the English mind" is exclusively occupied with single questions; sometimes with one, and sometimes with another, but at each time with one only. If Parliament did not share the same influences as the general body of fairly educated men, there would every now and then be a remarkable contrast between the subjects which interested Parliament and that which occupied the nation. The intensity of our peculiar sympathies makes this more likely.

Digitized by Google

Satirists say that the English nation is liable to intellectual *seizures;* and so exclusive and so restless is our intellectual absorption, so sudden its coming, so quick sometimes is its cessation, that there is some significance in the phrase. We are struck with particular ideas, and for the time think of nothing else. It will be found that Parliament, if it be sitting, thinks of the same. No instance of this can be more remarkable than the parliamentary proceedings on Mr. Roebuck's motion for an inquiry into the conduct of the Crimean campaign. There was great excitement in the nation at the moment; it has enabled the present generation to understand what historians did not before understand—the fall of poor Admiral Byng. The English nation cannot bear failure in war. If there had been any one to hang at the time Mr. Roebuck made his motion, and he could have been hung directly, certainly he would have been hung. On the other hand, the authority of statesmanlike opinion in Parliament, the weight of political connection, the legitimate disinclination to break up a government during a dangerous crisis, and—what is more remarkable—the great preponderance of sound argument, were united to influence Parliament not to grant even an inquiry. The result showed that the opinion of our leading statesmen was right, and that the arguments they produced were incontrovertible. Few investigations that have been commenced with so much outcry have ever had so trivial an effect. Yet, in opposition to all these influences, usually so omnipotent,—in opposition to the combined force of personal feeling and abstract argument,—the House of Commons so far accurately represented the sentiment of the country as to grant, and even to insist on granting, the inquiry. This parliamentary episode appears to be an *instantia lucifera* on the subject; it shows that, even when we could wish it otherwise, the House of Commons will echo the voice of the nation.

After all, there can be no more conclusive evidence of the substantial agreement between Parliament and the nation than the slight interest which is taken by the public in all questions of organic reform. Every one knows how the Reform Act of 1832 was carried; no one doubted that the public mind was excited then; no fair person could doubt what the decision of the nation then was. The "insurrection of the middle classes," as it has been called, ensured the success of the "Bill." It was alleged by its most reasonable opponents "that the measure could not be final; that those on whom it was proposed to confer the franchise would, even after the passing of the measure, be but small in comparison with those from whom it would be still withheld; that in a few years a similar agitation would recur, and a similar necessity of yielding to agitation;

Digitized by Google

that the storm of 1832 would be a feeble prelude to that of 1842," &c. These prophecies were not without a species of probability, but they have not been realised. No excited multitude clamours for enfranchisement; the reality is the reverse of the anticipation.

Two defects, however, may be discerned in the general accordance of parliamentary with national opinion. The Parliament certainly has an undue bias towards the sentiments and views of the landed interest. It is not easy to trace this in immediate results. We have said that we scarcely think that it is proved by the history of the free-trade agitation; that agitation was successful nearly, if not quite, as soon as it should have been. We may, indeed, speculate on what result might have occurred if the Irish famine had not happened, and if Sir R. Peel had not formed a statesmanlike judgment upon its consequences; we may believe that there would in that case have been an opposition between an educated nation converted by reasoning to the principles of free trade, and a majority in Parliament wedded by prejudice and interest to protection. Still, as this is but conjecture, we cannot cite it as conclusive evidence. Nor is the partiality to real property in matters of taxation which is occasionally dwelt on very easy to prove in figures. The account is at best a complicated one. The exemption of land from probate duty is partly compensated by the succession duty, by the land-tax, by the more severe pressure of the income-tax, and still more by the necessary incidence of much local taxation on this kind of property. Still, a fair observer, closely comparing the opinion of the House of Commons with that of the public out of doors, will certainly observe some signs of a partiality towards the landed interest among our legislators. We cannot ascribe this to any obvious preponderance in number of the county over the borough seats. Taking population as a test, it is otherwise. There are in England and Wales 159 county members, more than double that number (viz. 335) of borough members; the population of the represented boroughs is 7,500,000, that of the counties 10,500,000, consequently the represented boroughs have not as many inhabitants as the counties, though they elect twice the number of members. This test is, of course, a most imperfect one; but it may serve to show that in mere arithmetic the counties are not extravagantly favoured. The real cause is the peculiar structure of our county society. A county member is almost of necessity one of the county gentry; he must not only possess land, but it must be land in that place: no one else is "entitled to stand." On the other hand, boroughs return a very miscellaneous class of members. Many important landowners sit for them. So great is the variety, that no class is excluded from them altogether. This con-

Digitized by Google

trast must affect the distribution of parliamentary power. The county members form a peculiar class in the House of Commons, and exercise a steady influence there out of proportion to their mere numbers. Besides, so much more of social influence belongs to the territorial aristocracy than to any other class, that its weight is indefinitely increased. Not a few men enter Parliament mainly to augment their social importance, and over these the unquestioned possessors of social rank necessarily have great power. A third circumstance contributes its effect. The ministers of the crown are generally large landowners. By imperious social usage, they must be men of large property; and all opulence gravitates towards the land. Political opulence does so particularly. Until recently there was much difficulty in finding other investments not requiring sedulous personal attention, and not liable to be affected by political vicissitudes. It is of essential importance that ministers of state should be persons *at ease* in their worldly circumstances, and it is quite out of the question that they should have any share in the administration of commercial enterprises; they have enough to do without that. Their wealth too should not be in a form that could expose them even to the suspicion of stock-jobbing, or of making an improper use of political information. We have now many kinds of property debentures, canal shares, railway shares, &c., which have these advantages in nearly an equal degree with land itself; but the growth of these is recent. It may hereafter have important consequences, but it has not as yet had time to achieve them. Accordingly the series of cabinet ministers presents a nearly unbroken rank of persons who either are themselves large landowners, or are connected closely by birth or intermarriage with large landowners. This combination of circumstances gives to real property an influence in our political system greater than in strict theory we should wish it to have. It is true that the owners of much land are men of much leisure, and the possession of such property has a sedative influence, which in moderation may not be undesirable; but the effective representation of national opinion requires the selection of members of parliament from men of various occupations, various tendencies, and various sympathies. Public opinion in a composite nation is formed by the action and reaction of many kinds of minds; and abstractedly it seems a defect that the solid mass of county members, on whatever side of the house they sit, should present features so marked and uniform.

The second defect in the accordance of parliamentary with national opinion is but another phase of the same fact. Too little weight is at present given to the growing parts of the country, too much to the stationary. It appears that the county

Digitized by Google

constituencies in England and Wales have only increased, in the twenty years between 1837 and 1857, from 473,000 to 505,000, that is, at about six per cent; the borough constituencies, in the same period, have increased from 321,000 to 439,000, or at the rate of seventeen per cent. And it further appears, as we should expect, that the principal increase, both in the case of counties and boroughs, is not in the purely agricultural districts, but in the great scenes of manufacturing industry and in the metropolis. The growth of constituencies, according to the present franchise, is a much better test of relative importance than the mere growth of population; it indicates the increase of property, and therefore of presumable intelligence. These figures plainly indicate, if not an existing defect, yet a source of future defect in our representative system. If there was a just proportion between the two halves of England in 1832, there is not that just proportion now. In the long-run, public opinion will be much more influenced by the growing portion of the country than by the stationary. It is an indistinct perception of this fact that stimulates whatever agitation for reform at present exists. The manufacturers of Leeds and Manchester do not give levees and entertainments to Mr. Bright from any attraction to abstract democracy; the rate-paying franchise which Mr. Bright desires would place these classes under the irresistible control of their work-people. What our great traders really desire is, their own due weight in the community. They feel that the country squire and the proprietor of a petty borough have an influence in the nation above that which he ought to have, and greater than their own. A system arranged a quarter of a century ago presses with irritating constraint on those who have improved with half-magical rapidity during that quarter of a century,—is unduly favourable to those who have improved much less or not at all.

Subject, however, to these two exceptions, the House of Commons of the present day coincides nearly—or sufficiently nearly—in habitual judgment with the fairly intelligent and reasonably educated part of the community. Almost all persons, except the avowed holders of the democratic theory, would think that this is enough. Most people wish to see embodied in Parliament the *true judgment* of the nation; they wish to see an elected legislature fairly representing—that is, coinciding in opinion with—the thinking part of the community. What more, they would inquire, is wanted? We answer, that though this is by much the most important requisite of a good popular legislature, it is not absolutely the only one.

At present, the most important function of the representative part of our legislature—the House of Commons—is the *ruling* function. By a very well-known progress of events, the popular

Digitized by Google

part of our constitution has grown out of very small beginnings to a practical sovereignty over all the other parts. To possess the confidence of the House of Commons is all that a minister desires; the power of the crown is reduced to a kind of social influence; that of the House of Lords is contracted to a suspensive veto. For the exercise of this ruling function, the substantial conformity of the judgment and opinion of the House of Commons with that of the fairly cultivated and fairly influential part of the people at large is the most important of possible conditions,—is, in fact, the one condition on which the satisfactory performance of that function appears to depend. No legislature destitute of this qualification, whatever its other merits may be, can create that feeling of diffused satisfaction which is the peculiar happiness of constitutional countries, or can ensure that distinct comprehension of a popular policy which is the greatest source of their strength. Nothing can satisfy which is not comprehended: no policy can be popular which is not understood. This is a truth of every-day observation. We are, nowadays, so familiar with the beneficial results of the ruling action of Parliament, that we are engrossed by it; we fancy that it is the sole duty of a representative assembly: yet so far is this from being the case, that in England it was not even the original one.

The earliest function of a House of Commons was undeniably what we may call an *expressive* function. In its origin it was (matters of taxation excepted) a petitioning body; all the early statutes, as is well known, are in this form: the Petition of Right is an instance of its adoption in times comparatively recent. The function of the popular part of the legislature was then to represent to the king the *wants* of his faithful commons. They were called to express the feelings of those who sent them and their own. Of course, in its original form, this function is obsolete; and if something analogous to it were not a needful element in the duties of every representative assembly, it would be childish to refer to it. But in every free country it is of the utmost importance,—and, in the long-run, a pressing necessity,—that all opinions extensively entertained, all sentiments widely diffused, should be *stated* publicly before the nation. We may place the real decision of questions, the actual adoption of policies, in the ordinary and fair intelligence of the community, or in the legislature which represents it. But we must also take care to bring before that fair intelligence and that legislature the sentiments, the interests, the opinions, the prejudices, the wants, of all classes of the nation; we must be sure that no decision is come to in ignorance of real facts and intimate wants. The diffused multitude of moderate men, whose opinions, taken in the aggregate, form public opinion, are just as likely to be tyrannical towards

Digitized by Google

what they do not realise, inapprehensive of what is not argued out, thoughtless of what is not brought before them, as any other class can be. They will judge well of what they are made to understand; they will not be harsh to feelings that are brought home to their imagination; but the materials of a judgment must be given them, the necessary elements of imagination must be provided, otherwise the result is certain. A free government is the most stubbornly stupid of all governments to whatever is *unheard* by its deciding classes. On this account it is of the utmost importance that there should be in the House of Commons some persons able to speak, and authorised to speak, the wants, sentiments, and opinions of every section of the community—delegates, one might almost say, of that section. It is only by argument in the legislature that the legislature can be impressed; it is by argument in the legislature that the attention of the nation is most easily attracted and most effectually retained.

If, with the light of this principle, we examine our present system of representation, it seems unquestionable that it is defective. We do not provide any mode of expression for the sentiments of what are vaguely but intelligibly called the working classes. We ignore them. The Reform Act of 1832 assumed that it was expedient to give a representation to the wants and feelings of those who live in ten-pound houses, but that it was not expedient to give any such expression to those who live in houses rated below ten pounds. If we were called to consider that part of this subject, we should find much to excuse the framers of that act in the state of opinion which then prevailed and the general circumstances of the time. It was necessary to propose a simple measure; and this numerical demarcation has a trenchant simplicity. But if we now considerately review our electoral organisation, we must concede that, however perfectly it may provide an appropriate regulator for our national affairs, it omits to provide a befitting organ of *expression* for the desires and convictions of these particular classes.

The peculiar characteristics of a portion of the working classes render this omission of special importance. The agricultural labourers may have no sentiments on public affairs; but the artisan classes have. Not only are their circumstances peculiar, and their interests sometimes different from those of the higher orders of the community,—both which circumstances are likely to make them adopt special opinions, and are therefore grounds for a special representation,—but the habit of mind which their pursuits and position engender is of itself not unlikely to cause some eccentricity of judgment. Observers tell us that those who live by manual ingenuity are more likely to be

Digitized by Google

remarkable for originality than for modesty. In the present age,—and to some extent, we must expect, in every age,—such persons must be self-taught; and self-taught men are commonly characterised by a one-sided energy and something of a self-sufficient disposition. The *sensation* of perfection in a mechanical employment is of itself not without an influence tending towards conceit; and however instructed in definite learning energetic men in these classes may become, they are not subjected to the insensible influences of cultivated life, they do not live in the temperate zone of society, which soon chills the fervid heat of ideas of unseasonable originality. They are cooped up within the narrow circle of ideas that their own energy has provided, and are particularly liable to singular opinions. This is especially the case on politics. They are attracted to that subject in a free country of necessity; their active intellects are in search of topics for reflection; and this subject abounds in the very atmosphere of our natural life, is diffused in newspapers, obtruded at elections, to be heard at every corner of the street. Energetic minds in this class are therefore particularly likely to entertain eccentric opinions on political topics; and it is peculiarly necessary that such opinions should, by some adequate machinery, be stated and made public. If such singular views be brought into daily collision with ascertained facts and the ordinary belief of cultivated men, their worth can be tested, the weakness of their fallacious part exposed, any new grain of truth they may contain appreciated. On some subjects (possibly, for example, on simple questions of foreign policy) the views of self-taught men may be very valuable, for their moral instincts sometimes have a freshness rarely to be found. At any rate, whatever may be the abstract value of the special sentiments and convictions of the operative classes, their very speciality is a strong indication that our constitution is defective in providing no distinct outlet for their expression.

A theorist might likewise be inclined to argue that the Reform Act of 1832 was defective in not providing an appropriate organ for the expression of opinion of the higher orders of society. It selects a ten-pound householder for special favour. In large towns, nay to a certain extent in any town, the more cultivated and refined classes, who live in better houses than these, are practically disfranchised; the number of their inferiors renders valueless the suffrage conferred on them. We remember some years ago hearing a conversation between a foreigner and a most accomplished Englishman who lived in Russell Square. The foreigner was expatiating on the happiness of English people in being governed by a legislature in which they were represented. The Russell-Square scholar replied, "*I* am represented

Digitized by Google

by Mr. Wakley and Tom Duncombe." He felt the scorn natural to a cultivated man in a metropolitan constituency at the supposition that such representatives as these really expressed *his* views and sentiments. We know that in America, which is something like a nation of metropolitan constituencies, the taste and temper of the electors constantly excludes the more accomplished and leisured classes from the legislature, and how vulgar a stamp the taste and temper of those elected impresses on the proceedings of its legislature and the conduct of its administration. Men of refinement shrink from the House of Representatives as from a parish vestry. In England, though we feel this in some measure, we feel it much less. Other parts of our electoral system now afford a refuge to that refined cultivation which is hateful to and hates the grosser opinion of the small shopkeepers in cities. Our higher classes still desire to rule the nation; and so long as this is the case, the inherent tendencies of human nature secure them the advantage. Manner and bearing have an influence on the poor; the nameless charm of refinement tells; personal confidence is almost every where more easily accorded to one of the higher classes than to one of the lower classes. From this circumstance, there is an inherent tendency in any electoral system which does not vulgarise the government to protect the rich and to represent the rich. Though by the letter of the law, a man who lives in a house assessed at 10*l.* has an equal influence on the constitution of the legislature with a man whose house is assessed at 100*l.*, yet, in truth, the richer man has the security that the members of Parliament, and especially the foremost members of Parliament, are much more likely to be taken from his class than from a poorer class.

We may therefore conclude that there is not any ground for altering the electoral system established by the Reform Act of 1832 on account of its not providing for the due representation of the more cultivated classes. Indirectly it does so. But we must narrowly watch any changes in that system which are proposed to us, with the view of seeing whether their operation might not have a tendency to impair the subtle working of this indirect machinery. We must bear in mind that the practical disfranchisement of the best classes is the ascertained result of giving an equal weight to high and low in constituencies like the metropolitan.

These considerations do not affect our previous conclusion as to the lower orders. We ascertained that, however perfectly the House of Commons under the present system of election may coincide in judgment with the fairly educated classes of the country, and however competent it may on that account be to perform the ruling function of a popular legislature, it was ne-

Digitized by Google

vertheless defective in its provision for the performance of the *expressive* functions of such a legislature; because it provided no organ for informing Parliament and the country of the sentiments and opinions of the working, and especially of the artisan classes.

Another deficiency in the system of representation now existing is of a different nature. It is not only desirable that a popular legislature should be fitted to the discharge of its duties, but also that it should be elected by a process which occasions no unnecessary moral evils. A theorist would be inclined to advance a step further. He would require that a popular assembly should be elected in the mode which would diffuse the instruction given by the habitual possession of the franchise among the greatest number of competent persons, and which would deny it to the greatest number of unfit persons. But every reasonable theorist would hasten to add, that the end must never be sacrificed to the means. The mode of election which is selected must be one which will bring together an assembly of members fitted to discharge the functions of Parliament. *Among* those modes of election, this theoretical principle prescribes the rule of choice; but we must not, under its guidance, attempt to travel beyond the circle of those modes. And a practical statesman will be very cautious how he destroys a machinery which attains its essential object for the sake of an incidental benefit which might be expected from a different machinery. If we have a good legislature, he would say, let us not endanger its goodness for the sake of a possible diffusion of popular education. All sensible men would require that the advocates of such a measure should show beyond all reasonable doubt that the extension of the suffrage, which they recommend on this secondary ground, should not impair the attainment of the primary end for which *all* suffrage was devised. At the present moment, there certainly are many persons of substantial property and good education who do not possess the franchise, and to whom it would be desirable to give it, if they could be distinguished from others who are not so competent. A man of the highest education, who does not reside in a borough, may have large property in the funds, in railway shares, or any similar investment; but he will have no vote unless his house is rated above 50*l.* But, as we have said, we must not, from a theoretical desire to include such persons in our list of electors, run a risk of admitting also any large number of persons who would be unfit to vote, and thereby impairing the practical utility of Parliament. No such hesitation should, however, hold us back when peculiar moral evils can be proved to arise from a particular mode of election. If that be so, we ought on the instant to make the

Digitized by Google

most anxious search for some other mode of election not liable to the same objection: we ought to run some risk; if another mode of election can be suggested, apparently equal in efficiency, which would not produce the same evils, we should adopt it at once in place of the other. We must act on the spirit of faith that what is morally wrong cannot be politically right.

This objection applies in the strongest manner to one portion of our electoral system, namely, the smaller borough constituencies. We there intrust the franchise to a class of persons few enough to be bought, and not respectable enough to refuse to be bought. The disgraceful exposures of some of these boroughs before election committees make it probable that the same abuses exist in others: doubtless, too, we do not know the worst. The worst constituencies are slow to petition, because the local agents of both parties are aware of what would come to light, and fear the consequent penalties. Enough, however, is in evidence for us to act upon. Some of these small boroughs are dependent on some great nobleman or man of fortune; and this state is perhaps preferable to their preserving a vicious independence: but even this state is liable to very many objections. It is most advantageous that the nominal electors should be the real electors. Legal fictions have a place in courts of law; it is sometimes better or more possible to strain venerable maxims beyond their natural meaning than to limit them by special enactment: but legal fictions are very dangerous in the midst of popular institutions and a genuine moral excitement. We speak day by day of "shams;" and the name will be for ever applied to modes of election which pretend to intrust the exclusive choice to those who are known by every body never to choose. The Reform Act of 1832 was distinctly founded on the principle that all modes of election should be *real*.

We arrive, therefore, at the result that the system of 1832 is defective, because it established, or rather permitted to continue, moral evils which it is our duty to remove, if by possibility they can be removed. However, in that removal we must be careful to watch exactly what we are doing. It has been shown that the letter of the Reform Act makes no provision for the special representation of wealth and cultivation; the representation which they have is attained by *indirect* means. The purchasable boroughs are undoubtedly favourable to wealth; the hereditary boroughs to men of hereditary cultivation; and we should be careful not to impair unnecessarily the influence of these elements by any alteration we may resolve upon.

We can now decide on the result which we should try to attain in a new Reform Bill. If we could obtain a House of Commons that should be well elected, that should contain true

Digitized by Google

and adequate exponents of all class interests, that should coincide in opinion with the fair intelligence of the country, we shall have all which we ought to desire. We have satisfied ourselves that we do not possess all these advantages now; we have seen that a part of our system of election is grossly defective; that our House of Commons contains no adequate exponents of the views of the working classes; that though its judgment has, as yet, fairly coincided with public opinion, yet that its constitution gives a dangerous preponderance to the landed interest, and is likely to fail us hereafter unless an additional influence be given to the more growing and energetic classes of society.

We should think it more agreeable (and perhaps it would be so to most of our readers) if we were able at once to proceed to discuss the practical plan by which these objects might be effected; but in deference to a party which has some zealous adherents, and to principles which, in an indistinct shape, are widely diffused, we must devote a few remarks to the consideration of the ultra-democratic theory; and as we have to do so, it will be convenient to discuss in connection with it one or two of the schemes which the opponents of that theory have proposed for testing political intelligence.

As is well known, the democratic theory requires that parliamentary representation should be proportioned to mere numbers. This is not, indeed, the proposition which is at this moment put forward. The most important section of democratic reformers now advocate a rate-paying or household franchise; but this is either avowedly as a step to something farther, or because from considerations of convenience it is considered better to give the franchise only to those whose residences can be identified. But it is easy to show that the rate-paying franchise is almost equally liable with the manhood suffrage to a most important objection. That objection, of course, is, that the adoption of the scheme would give entire superiority to the lower part of the community. Nothing is easier than to show that a rate-paying franchise would have that effect. In England and Wales

The number of houses assessed at 10*l.* and above is computed to be	990,000
„ „ . at 6*l.* and under 10*l.*	572,000
„ „ under 6*l.*	1,713,000
	3,275,000

More than half the persons who would be admitted by the rate-paying franchise are, therefore, of a very low order, living in houses under 6*l.* rent, and two-thirds are below 10*l.*, the lowest qualification admitted by the present law. It therefore seems

Digitized by Google

quite certain that the effect of the proposed innovation must be very favourable to ignorance and poverty, and very unfavourable to cultivation and intelligence.

There used to be much argument in favour of the democratic theory, on the ground of its supposed conformity with the abstract rights of man. This has passed away; but we cannot say that the reasons by which it has been replaced are more distinct: we think that they are less distinct. We can understand that an enthusiast should maintain, on fancied grounds of immutable morality, or from an imaginary conformity with a supernatural decree, that the ignorant should govern the instructed; but we do not comprehend how any one can maintain the proposition on grounds of expediency. We might believe it was right to submit to the results of such a polity; but those results, it would seem, must be beyond controversy pernicious. The arguments from expediency, which are supposed to establish the proposition, are never set forth very clearly; and we do not think them worth confuting. We are, indeed, disposed to believe, in spite of much direct assertion to the contrary, that the democratic theory still rests not so much on reason as on a kind of sentiment—on an obscure conception of abstract rights. The animation of its advocates is an indication of it. They think they are contending for the "rights" of the people; and they endeavour to induce the people to believe so too. We hold this opinion the more strongly, because we believe that there *is* such a thing, after all, as abstract right in political organisations. We find it impossible to believe that all the struggles of men for liberty,—all the enthusiasm it has called forth, all the passionate emotions it has caused in the very highest minds, all the glow of thought and rustle of obscure feeling which the very name excites in the whole mass of men,—have their origin in calculations of advantage and a belief that such and such arrangements would be beneficial. The masses of men are very difficult to excite on bare grounds of self-interest; most easy, if a bold orator tells them confidently they are *wronged*. The foundation of government upon simple utility is but the fiction of philosophers; it has never been acceptable to the natural feelings of mankind. There is far greater truth in the formula of the French writers, that "*le droit dérive de la capacité.*" Some sort of feeling akin to this lurks, we believe, in the minds of our reformers; they think they can show that some classes now unenfranchised are as capable of properly exercising the franchise as some who have possessed it formerly, or some who have it now. The five-pound householder of to-day is, they tell us, in education and standing but what the ten-pound householder was in 1832. The opponents of the theory are pressed with the argument, that every fit person should have the franchise, and that

Digitized by Google

many who are excluded are as fit as some who exercise it, and from whom no one proposes to take it away.

The answer to the argument is plain. Fitness to govern,—for that is the real meaning of exercising the franchise which elects a *ruling* assembly,—is not an absolute quality of any individual. That fitness is relative and comparative; it must depend on the community to be governed, and on the merits of other persons who may be capable of governing that community. A savage chief may be capable of governing a savage tribe; he may have the right of governing it, for he may be the sole person capable of so doing; but he would have no right to govern England. We must look likewise to the competitors for the sovereignty. Whatever may be your capacity for rule, you have no right to obtain the opportunity of exercising it by dethroning a person who is *more* capable. You are wronging the community if you do: for you are depriving it of a better government than that which you can give to it. You are wronging also the ruler you supersede; for you are depriving him of the appropriate exercise of his faculties. Two wrongs are thus committed from a fancied idea that abstract capacity gives a right to rule irrespective of comparative relations. The true principle is, that every person has a right to *so much political power as he can exercise without impeding any other person who would more fitly exercise such power.* If we apply this to the lower orders of society, we see the reason why, notwithstanding their numbers, they must always be subject—always at least be comparatively uninfluential. Whatever their capacity may be, it must be less than that of the higher classes, whose occupations are more instructive and whose education is more prolonged. Any such measure for enfranchising the lower orders as would overpower, and consequently disfranchise, the higher, should be resisted on the ground of "abstract right;" you are proposing to take power from those who have the superior capacity, and to vest it in those who have but an inferior capacity, or, in many cases, no capacity at all. If we probe the subject to the bottom, we shall find that justice is on the side of a graduated rule, in which all persons should have an influence proportioned to their political capacity; and it is at this graduation that the true maxims of representative government really aim. They wish that the fairly intelligent persons, who create public opinion, as we call it, in society, should rule in the state, which is the authorised means of carrying that opinion into action. This is the body which has the greater right to rule; this is the *felt intelligence* of the nation, "*la légitime aristocratie, celle qu'acceptent librement les masses, sur qui doit exercer son pouvoir.*"*

It is impossible to deny that this authority, in matters of

* M. Guizot, Essai sur les Origines du Gouvernement réprésentatif.

Digitized by Google

political opinion, belongs by right, and is felt to belong in fact, to the higher orders of society rather than to the lower. The advantages of leisure, of education, of more instructive pursuits, of more instructive society, must and do produce an effect. A writer of very democratic leanings has observed, that "there is an unconquerable, and, to a certain extent, beneficial proneness in man to rely on the judgment and authority of those who are elevated above himself in rank and riches, from the irresistible associations of the human mind; a feeling of respect and deference is entertained for a superior in station which enhances and exalts all his good qualities, gives more grace to his thoughts, more wisdom to his opinions, more weight to his judgment, more excellence to his virtues. . . . . Hence the elevated men of society will always maintain an ascendency which, without any direct exertion of influence, will affect the result of popular elections; and when to this are added the capabilities which they possess, or ought to possess, from their superior intelligence, of impressing their own opinions on other classes, it will be evident that if any sort of control were justifiable, it would be superfluous for any good purpose."* There are individual exceptions; but in questions of this magnitude we must speak broadly: and we may say that political intelligence will in general exist rather in the educated classes than in the less educated, rather in the rich than the poor; and not only that it will exist, but that it will, in the absence of misleading feelings, be *felt* by both parties to exist.

We have quoted the above passage for more reasons than one. It not only gives an appropriate description of the popular association of superiority in judgment with superiority in station, but it draws from the fact of that association an inference which would be very important if it were correct. It says, in substance, that as the higher orders are felt by the lower to be more capable of governing, they will be chosen by the lower, if the latter are left free to choose; that, therefore, no matter how democratic the government—in fact, the more democratic the government, the surer are the upper orders to lead. But experience shows that this is an error. If the acquisition of power is left to the unconscious working of the natural influences of society, the rich and the cultivated will certainly acquire it; they obtain it insensibly, gradually, and without the poorer orders knowing that they are obtaining it. But the result is different when, by the operation of a purely democratic constitution, the selection of rulers is submitted to the direct vote of the populace. The lower orders are then told that they are perfectly able to judge; demagogues assert it to them without ceasing: the con-

* Bailey on Representative Government; quoted in Sir G. Lewis's "Essay on the Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion," p. 228.

Digitized by Google

stitution itself is appealed to as an incontrovertible witness to the fact; as it has placed the supreme power in the hands of the lower and more numerous classes, it would be contravening it to suppose that the real superiority was in the higher and fewer. Moreover, when men are expressly asked to acknowledge their superiors, they are by no means always inclined to do so. They do not object to yield a mute observance, but they refuse a definite act of homage. They will obey, but they will not *say* that they will obey. In consequence, history teaches that under a democratic government those who speak the feelings of the majority themselves have a greater chance of being chosen to rule, than any of the higher orders, who, under any other form of government, would be admitted to be the better judges. The natural effect of such a government is to mislead the poor.

We have no room to notice the specific evils which would accrue from the adoption of an unmixedly democratic constitution. One, however, which has not been quite appreciated follows naturally from the remarks we have made. There is a risk of vulgarising the whole tone, method, and conduct of public business. We see how completely this has been done in America; a country far more fitted, at least in the northern states, for the democratic experiment than any old country can be. Nor must we imagine that this vulgarity of tone is a mere external expression, not affecting the substance of what is thought, or interfering with the policy of the nation. No defect really eats away so soon the political ability of a nation. A vulgar tone of discussion disgusts cultivated minds with the subject of politics; they will not apply themselves to master a topic which, besides its natural difficulties, is encumbered with disgusting phrases, low arguments, and the undisguised language of coarse selfishness. We all know how we should like to interfere in ward elections, borough politics, or any public matter over which a constant habit of half-educated discussion has diffused an atmosphere of deterring associations. A high morality, too, shrinks with the inevitable shyness of superiority from intruding itself into the presence of low debates. The inevitable consequence of vulgarising our Parliament would be the deterioration of public opinion, not only in its more refined elements, but in all the tangible benefits we derive from the application to politics of thoroughly cultivated minds.

Nor can we allude to the refutation of the purely democratic theory which the facts of English history supply us. It is frequently something like pedantry when reference is made to the origin of the House of Commons as a source of *data* for deciding on the proper constitution for it now. What might have been a proper constitution for it when an inconsiderable part of the government, may be a most improper one now that it is the ruling

Digitized by Google

part. Still, one brief remark may be advanced as to the early history of our representative system, which will have an important reference to the topic. "Whilst," writes one of our soundest constitutional antiquaries, "boroughs were thus reluctant to return members, and burgesses disinclined to serve in that capacity, the sheriffs assumed a right of sending or omitting precepts at their pleasure. Where boroughs were unwilling or unable to send representatives, the sheriff, from favour or indulgence, withheld the precept, which in strictness he was bound to issue, and thus acquired a discretionary power of settling what places were to elect, and what places were not to elect, members of Parliament. In his return to the writ of summons, he sometimes reported that he had sent his precept to a borough, but had received no answer to it. Sometimes he asserted, without the slightest regard to truth, that there were no more cities or boroughs in his bailiwick than those mentioned in his return. At other times he qualified this assertion by adding that there were none fit to send members to Parliament, or that could be induced to send them. No notice seems ever to have been taken of these proceedings of the sheriffs; nor is there the slightest ground for suspecting that in the exercise of his discretionary power he was directed by any secret instructions from the king and council: 'I have never seen or heard,' says Brady, 'of any particular directions from the king and council or others to the sheriffs, for sending their precepts to this or that borough only and not to others.' *Provided there was a sufficient attendance of members for the public business, the government seem to have been indifferent to the number that came, or to the number of places from which they were sent."** The public business of that time was different from the public business which is now transacted by Parliament; but we may paraphrase the sentence into one that is applicable to us. Provided we have a House of Commons coinciding in opinion with the general mass of the public, and containing representatives competent to express the peculiar sentiments of all peculiar classes, we have provided for our "public business;" we need not trouble ourselves much further, we shall have attained all reasonable objects of desire, and established a polity with which we may be content.

The most obvious way of attempting this is, to represent, or attempt to represent, intelligence directly. The simplest plan of embodying public opinion in a legislature, is to give a special representation in that legislature, to the politically intelligent persons who create that opinion. To attain this end directly is, however, impossible. There is no test of intelligence which a revising barrister could examine, on which attorneys could argue before him. The absurdity of the idea is only rendered

* Allen on Parliamentary Reform, 1832.

Digitized by Google

more evident by the few proposals which are made in the hope of realising it. Mr. Holyoake proposes that the franchise should be given to those who could pass a political examination; an examination, that is, in some standard text-book,—Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, or some work of equal reputation. But it does not need to be explained that this would enfranchise extremely few people in a country. Only a few persons give, or can give, a scientific attention to politics; and very many who cannot, are in every respect competent to give their votes as electors, and even to serve as representatives. It is probable that the adoption of such an examination suffrage, in addition to the kinds of suffrage which exist now, would not add one per cent to the present constituencies; and that if it were made a necessary qualification for the possession of a vote, we should thereby disfranchise ninety-nine hundredths of the country. A second proposal with the same object is, to give votes to all members of "learned societies." But this would be contemptibly futile. There is no security whatever that members of learned societies should be really learned. They are close corporations; and the only check on the admission of improper persons in future is the discretion of those who have been admitted already. At present most members of such societies undoubtedly have an interest in the objects for which they were formed; but create a political motive, and a skilful parliamentary agent will soon fill the lists with the names of persons not celebrated for scientific learning, but who know how to vote correctly upon occasion. The idea of a direct representation of intelligence wholly fails from the non-existence of a visible criterion of that intelligence. All that can be done in this direction must be effected by a gradual extension of the principle which has given members to our Universities. No one can obtain admission to these bodies without a prolonged course of study, or without passing a strict examination in several subjects. This is a kind of franchise not to be manufactured; it is only obtained as a collateral advantage, by persons who are in pursuit of quite different objects. Such bodies, however, are obviously few, and such kinds of franchise are necessarily limited. But they should be extended as far as possible; and as many such bodies as can be found will tend to supply us with an additional mode of giving a representation to cultivation and refinement,—an object which we noticed as one of the desirable ends apparently least provided for by the letter of our present system.*

* In relation to this subject, we must call special attention to the claims of the University of London and of the Scotch Universities to representation in Parliament. The former University had a distinct pledge from the Government which founded it that it should be placed on an equality in every respect with

Digitized by Google

The criteria by which a franchise can be determined must have two characteristics. They must be evident and conspicuous —tests about which there can be no question. Our registration courts cannot decide metaphysical niceties; our machinery must be tough, if it is to stand the wear and tear of eager contests. Secondly, as we have explained, such criteria must be difficult to manufacture for a political object. Our tests must not be counterfeited, and they must be conspicuous. These two requirements nearly confine us to a property qualification. Property is, indeed, a very imperfect test of intelligence; but it is some test. If it has been inherited, it guarantees education; if acquired, it guarantees ability. Either way it assures us of something. In all countries where any thing has prevailed short of manhood suffrage, the principal limitation has been founded on criteria derived from property. And it is very important to observe that there is a special appropriateness in the selection. Property has not only a certain connection with general intelligence, but it has a peculiar connection with *political* intelligence. It is a great guide to a good judgment to have much to lose by a bad judgment. Generally speaking, the welfare of a country will be most dear to those who are well off there. Some considerations, it is true, may limit this principle: great wealth has an emasculating tendency; the knowledge that they have much at stake may make men timid in action, and too anxious, for the successful discharge of high duties: still the broad conclusion is unaffected, that the possession of property is not only an indication of general mind, but has a peculiar tendency to generate *political mind.*

Similar considerations limit the kinds of property to be selected. Our property qualification must be conspicuous and uncreateable. Real property,—houses and land,—on which our present qualification is based, possess these elements in a pre-eminent degree. We think, however, that they are not the only kinds of property which now in a sufficient degree possess these requirements. They probably were so formerly; but one of the most important alterations in our social condition is the change in the nature of much of our wealth. The growth of what lawyers call personal property has of late years been enormous. Rail-

Oxford and Cambridge. And such Universities would not only introduce additional representatives of intellectual culture into the House of Commons, but representatives also of *free* intellectual culture, as distinguished from the representatives of the ecclesiastical culture of the older Universities. Mr. Bright has reproached the members for Oxford and Cambridge Universities with their habitual antagonism to Reform. This is, we fear, a true accusation. At a time when educational questions are engrossing a larger and larger share of public attention, an adequate representation of *liberal* intellectual culture is most desirable in the House of Commons.

Digitized by Google

way shares, canal shares, public funds, bank shares, debentures without number, are only instances of what we mean. Great industrial undertakings are a feature in our age, and it is fitting that a share in them should give a franchise as much as an estate in land. Two conditions only would be necessary to be observed. First, the property must be substantial, as it is called; that is to say, it should be remunerative. Property which does not yield an income is not sufficiently tangible for the purposes of qualification: men of business may say it is *about* to yield a dividend; but this is always open to infinite argument. It would be necessary to provide that the business property to be represented should have been for a moderate period—say three years—properly remunerative; no one should register for such property unless it had for that period paid a regular interest. Secondly, such property should have been in the possession of the person wishing to register on account of it for at least an equal previous period. This is necessary to prevent the creation of fictitious votes. Real property is, indeed, exposed to this danger; but the occupancy of houses and lands is a very visible fact, and acts of ownership over the soil are tolerably well known on the spot. It is therefore somewhat difficult to create fictitious tenancies or freeholds. In the case of share-property there is no equal check. The only precaution which can be taken is, to make the pecuniary risk of those who try to create such votes as large as possible. If it be required that the property be registered for a moderate period in the company's books as belonging to the person who claims to vote in respect of it, that person must have during that time the sole right to receive the dividends, and the shares will be liable for all his debts. If a real owner chooses to put a nominal one in this position, he does it at the risk of both principal and income.

We have, then, arrived at the end of another division of our subject. We have shown that the democratic theory is erroneous, and that the consequences of acting upon it would be pernicious. We have discussed the most plausible schemes which have been suggested for testing political intelligence, and we have found reason to think that a property qualification is the best of those modes. It has incidentally appeared that the property qualification which at present exists in England is defective, because it only takes cognisance of a single kind of property. We may now resume the thread of our discussion, which we laid aside to show the errors of the democratic theory. We proceed to indicate how the defects which have been proved to be parts of our existing system of representation can be remedied without impairing its characteristic excellence, without destroying a legislature which is in tolerable conformity with intelligent opinion.

Digitized by Google

The first defect which we noticed was, that the existing system takes no account of the views and feelings of the working classes, and affords no means for their expression. How, then, can this be supplied? It is evident that this end can only be approached in two ways; we may give to the working classes a *little* influence in all constituencies, or we may give to them a good deal of influence in a few constituencies. By the conditions of the problem they are to have some power in the country, but not all the power; and these are the only two modes in which that end can be effected.

The objection to the first plan is in the nature of a dilemma. Either your arrangements give to the working classes a sufficient power to enable them to decide the choice of the member, or they do not. If they do, they make these classes absolute in the state. If the degree of influence which you grant to them in *every* constituency is sufficient to enable them to choose the representative for that constituency, you have conferred on these inferior classes the unlimited control of the nation. On the other hand, if the degree of influence you give to the poorer classes is not sufficient to enable them to control the choice of any members, you have done nothing. There will be no persons in Parliament inclined by nature and empowered by authority to express their sentiments; their voice will be as much unheard in Parliament as it is now. If the poor are to have a diffused influence in all constituencies, it must be either a great one or a small one. A small one will amount only to the right of voting for a candidate who is *not* elected; a great one will, in reality, be the establishment of democracy.

We shall see the truth of this remark more distinctly if we look a little in detail at one or two of the plans which are proposed with this object. Perhaps the most remarkable of these is that which is at present in operation in Prussia. The suffrage is there very diffused; it amounts to something very like manhood suffrage. But the influence of the lower classes is limited in this way: The constituency is divided into classes according to the amount of direct taxation they respectively pay. The names of those voters who pay the highest amount of tax are put together till a third part of the whole amount of direct taxes paid by the electoral district has been reached. These form the first class. Again, as many names are taken as will make up another third of the same total taxation; and these form the second class. The third class is formed of all the rest, and each class has an equal vote. By this expedient a few very rich persons in class 1, and a moderate number of moderately rich persons in class 2, have each of them as much influence as the entire number of the poorer orders in class 3. In Prussia a system of double re-

Digitized by Google

presentation has also been adopted, and for that purpose the constituency is divided into sections. But we need not confuse ourselves with prolix detail; the principle is all which is to the purpose. The effect of the plan is evident; it is equivalent to giving to the working classes *one-third* of the influence in every constituency, and no more than one-third. But it is evident that this arrangement not only gives no security for the return of a satisfactory spokesman for the lower orders, but that it provides that no such spokesman shall be returned. The two superior classes are two-thirds of the constituency, and they will take effectual care that no member animated solely with the views of the other third shall ever be elected. So far as class feeling goes, the power given to the lower orders is only the power of voting in a perpetual minority. Undoubtedly, in case of a division between the two superior classes, the lower orders would hold the balance; they would have the power in all constituencies of deciding who should and who should not be the member. But this is not the kind of influence which we have shown it to be desirable that the lower orders should possess. Nothing can be more remote from their proper sphere than the position of arbitrator between the conflicting views of two classes above them. We wish that they should have a few members to express their feelings; we do not wish that they should decide on the critical controversies of their educated fellow-subjects,—that they should determine by a casting and final vote the policy of the nation.

Another plan suggested is, that the lower orders should have a single vote, and that persons possessed of property should have a second vote. But statistics show that the power which this would give to the lower orders would be enormous. For example, if it should be enacted that all persons living in houses rated at less than 10*l.* shall have one vote, and that those living in houses rated at more than 10*l.*, two votes, we should have

990,000 living in houses of 10*l.* and more than 10*l.*	with 1,980,000 votes,
2,280,000 living in houses under 10*l.* . . .	with 2,280,000 votes;

giving a clear majority throughout the country to the lowest class of rate-payers; and that majority would of course be much augmented if we conferred (as the advocates of manhood suffrage propose) a vote on every adult male in the country, whether he paid rates or not. The inevitable effect of this plan would be to give an authoritative control to the poorer classes. We might, indeed, try to obviate this by giving a still greater number of votes, say three or four, to the richer class; but then we should reduce the poorer class to an impotent minority throughout the

Digitized by Google

country. In the first case, they would have the power of returning nearly all the members of the legislature; in the second, they would not as a class, or with an irresistible influence, return any.

Another scheme, proposed with this object, at least in part, is the "representation of minorities," as it is commonly called. This is to be attained by the ingenious device of making the number of votes to be possessed by each constituent less than the number of members to be returned by the constituency. The consequence is inevitable: an ascertainable minority of the constituency, by voting for a single candidate only, can effectually secure his election. Thus, if the number of members is three and the number of votes two, any fraction of the constituency greater than two-fifths can be sure of returning a member, if they are in earnest enough on the matter to vote for him only. The proof of this is, that a minority of two-fifths will have exactly as many votes to give to one member as the remaining three-fifths have to give to each of three members. If the constituency be 5000, a minority of two-fifths of the electors, or 2000, would have 2000 votes to give to a single candidate; and the remaining 3000 would have only 6000 votes to divide between three candidates, which is only 2000 for each. A minority at all greater than 2000, therefore, would, if it managed properly, be certain to return a member. The objection to this plan is, that it would rather tend to give us a Parliament principally elected by the lower orders, with special members among them to express the sentiments of the wealthier classes, than a Parliament generally agreeing with the wealthier classes, and containing special representatives for the lower: the principal representation is almost by express legislation given to the more numerous classes; a less to the minority. It would not solve the problem of giving a certain power to the lower orders, and yet not giving them a predominant power. In the case which we have supposed of a constituency with three members and two votes, the minority also would be a larger one than the richer classes can permanently hope to constitute in the country. Two-fifths of a great town must necessarily include many of the poorer, less cultivated, and less competent. We must remember, also, that the disproportion in number between rich and poor, even between the decidedly poor and the rather wealthy, tends to augment. Society increases most rapidly at its lower end; the wide base extends faster than the narrower summit. At present persons living in "ten-pound houses," or upwards, are something like 21 per cent of the adult males in the nation, and about 30 per cent of the rate-paying population. But in process of time the inevitable increase of the humbler orders will reduce them to a far more scanty proportion.

Digitized by Google

The operation of the plan would in this respect be still more defective if it were combined, as is often proposed, with an increase of the number of members returned by the constituencies to which it is to be applied. If four members were given to a populous constituency, and each elector were to have three votes, it would require that a minority should be more than three-sevenths* of the constituency, to enable it to be certain of returning a candidate. The rich and educated cannot expect to remain so large a fraction of the nation as this; they are not so now.

The most plausible way of embodying the minority principle in action would be to give only one vote to each person, and only *two* members to the constituency. In this case, any minority greater than one-third of the constituency would be sure of returning a member; and as this fraction is smaller than those we have mentioned, it would evidently be more suitable to the inevitable fewness of the rich and intelligent. But even this plan would give half the members of the country to the least capable class of voters; and it would have the additional disadvantage of establishing a poor-class member and rich-class member side by side in the same constituency, which would evidently be likely to excite keen jealousy and perpetual local bitterness.

We believe, indeed, that it was an afterthought in the advocates of "minority representation," to propose it as a means of giving some, but not too much, representation to the poor. Its name shows that it was originally devised as a means of giving a representation to minorities *as such*. The extreme case used to be suggested of a party which had a very large minority in every constituency, but which had not a majority in any, and had not therefore any share in the representation. It cannot be denied that such a case might occur: but if the constituencies be, as they should be, of varied kinds, it is very unlikely; and in politics, any contingency that is very unlikely never ought to be thought of; the problems of practical government are quite sufficiently complicated, if those who have the responsibility of solving them deal only with difficulties which are imminent and dangers which are probable. But in the actual working of affairs, and irrespectively of any case so extreme as that which is put forward, the elimination of minorities which takes place at general elections is a process highly beneficial. It is decidedly advantageous that every active or intelligent minority should have adequate spokesmen in the legislature; but it is often not desirable that it should be represented there in exact pro-

* The rule is, that a minority, to be certain of electing its candidate, must be more than that fraction of the constituency, which may be expressed as follows:

$$\frac{\text{The number of votes.}}{\text{The number of members} + \text{the number of votes.}}$$

Digitized by Google

portion to its national importance. A very considerable number of by no means unimportant persons rather disapproved of the war with Russia; but their views were very inadequately represented in the votes of Parliament, though a few able men adequately expressed their characteristic sentiments. And this was as it should be. The judgment of the Parliament ought always to be coincident with the opinion of the nation; but there is no objection to its being more decided; it is extremely important that it should not be less decided. Very frequently it is of less importance which of two courses be selected than that the one which is selected should be consistently adhered to and energetically carried through. If every minority had exactly as much weight in Parliament as it has in the nation, there might be a risk of indecision. Members of Parliament are apt enough to deviate from the plain decisive path, from vanity, from a wish to be original, from a nervous conscientiousness. They are subject to special temptations, which make their decisions less simple and consistent than the nation's. We need a counteracting influence; and it will be no subject for regret if that influence be tolerably strong. It is therefore no disadvantage, but the contrary, that a diffused minority in the country is in general rather inadequately represented. A strong conviction in the ruling power will give it strength of volition. The House of Commons should think as the nation thinks; but it should think so rather more strongly, and with somewhat less of wavering.

It was necessary to discuss this aspect of the minority principle, though it may seem a deviation from the investigation into the best mode of giving a due but not an undue influence to the working classes. The advocates of that principle generally consider its giving a proper, and not more than a proper, degree of power to the poor as a subordinate and incidental advantage in a scheme which for other reasons ought to be adopted; it was therefore desirable to prove that no such other reasons exist, as well as that it would very imperfectly, if at all, tend to place the working classes in the position we desire.

Some persons have imagined that the enfranchisement of all the lower orders may be obtained without its attendant consequence, the disfranchisement of other classes, by means of the system of "double representation," which gives to the primary electors only the power of nominating certain choosers, or secondary electors, who are to select the ultimate representative. This proposal was made by Hume many years ago; it formed part of more than one of the earlier French constitutions; and it is now being tried, as we have observed, in Prussia. We have an example of its effects likewise in a part of the constitution of the United States. Although, therefore, we may not have quite

Digitized by Google

so full a trial of the proposed machinery as we could wish, we have some experience of it. The most obvious objection to it is, that it gives to the working classes the theoretical supremacy as much as a scheme of single representation. Whether the working classes choose the member of Parliament, or whether they choose an intermediate body who are to choose the member, their power of selection will be equally uncontrolled, the overwhelming advantage derived from their numbers will be the same. It is alleged that the working classes will be more fit to choose persons who would exercise an intermediate suffrage; that they could choose persons in their own neighbourhood well known to them, and for whom they had a respect; and that the ultimate representative nominated by these local worthies would be a better person than the working classes would have nominated themselves at first. And in quiet times, and before a good machinery of electioneering influence had been organised, we are inclined to believe that such would be the effect. The working classes might, in the absence of excitement and artificial stimulus, choose persons whom they knew to be better judges than themselves; and, in accordance with the theory of the scheme, would give to them a *bonâ-fide* power of independent judgment. But in times of excitement this would not be the case. The primary electors can if they will require from the secondary a promise that they will choose such and such members; they can exact a distinct pledge on the subject, and give their votes only to those who will take that pledge. This is actually the case in the election of the President in the United States. As a check on the anticipated inconveniences of universal suffrage, the framers of the federal constitution provided that the President should be chosen by an electoral college elected by universal suffrage, and not by the nation at large directly. In practice, however, the electoral college is a "sham." Its members are only chosen because they will vote that Mr. Buchanan be President, or that Colonel Fremont be President; no one cares to know any thing else about them. There is no debate in the college, no exercise of discretionary judgment: they travel to Washington, and give their vote in a "sealed envelope," and they have no other duty to perform. According to these votes the President is elected. Such, indeed, appears the natural result wherever the lower orders take a strong interest in the selection of the ultimate members for the constituency. They have the power of absolutely determining the choice of those members; and when they care to exercise it, they will exercise it. In Prussia, as it would appear from the newspaper narrative of the recent elections, a real choice has been exercised by the Wahlmänner—the secondary electors. But a few years of experience among a phlegmatic people are not a

Digitized by Google

sufficient trial; there are as yet no parliamentary agents at Berlin. In this country, as in America, an effectual stimulus would soon be applied to the primary electors. If twenty intermediate stages were introduced, the result would be identical: a pledge would be exacted at every stage; the primary body would alone exercise a real choice, and the member would be the direct though disguised nominee of the lower orders. This scheme would every where, in critical times, and in *electioneering* countries at all times, give to the democracy an uncontrolled power.

An expedient has, it is true, been proposed for preventing this. It has been suggested that the secondary electors,—the electoral college in the American phrase,—should have other duties to perform besides that of electing the representative. Suppose, for example, that the electors at large chose a municipal town-council, and that the latter elected the representative of the town in the legislature; it is thought that persons with good judgment would be chosen to ensure the due performance of the municipal duties, and that a good member of Parliament would be selected by the *bonâ-fide* choice of those persons with good judgment. The scheme would be far too alien to English habits and traditions to be seriously proposed for adoption by this country even if its abstract theory were sound; but there is an obvious objection of principle to it. The local duties of a municipal council are too different from that of selecting a parliamentary representative to be properly combined with them. We should probably have a town-council of political partisans, as was the case before the Municipal Reform Act; and the uninteresting local duties would be sacrificed to the more interesting questions of the empire. In the real operation of the scheme very much would depend on the *time* at which the town-council was elected. If it were elected simultaneously with the general election of members of Parliament, nobody would think of any thing but the latter. The town-councillors would be chosen to vote for the borough member, and with no regard to any other consideration. We should have a fictitious electoral college, with the added inconvenience that it would be expected to perform duties for which it was not selected, and to which it would be entirely ill-suited. On the other hand, if the town-council were elected when the parliamentary election was not thought of, we might, in times of fluctuating opinion, have a marked opposition between the opinion of the town-council and the opinion of the constituency. In an excitable country,—and every country which takes a regular interest in politics becomes excitable,—no such opposition would be endured. It would be monstrous that the member for London at a critical epoch, say when a question of war or peace was pressing for decision, should be nominated by a town-council

Digitized by Google

elected some time before, when no such question was even thought of. There used in the ante-Reform-Bill times to be occasional riots when the close corporations, with whom the exclusive suffrage in many boroughs then rested, made a choice not approved of by the population of the town. If this was the case when the borough-councillors were only exercising an immemorial right, it will be much more likely to be so when they are but recently nominated agents, deriving their whole authority from the dissentients, and making an unpopular choice in the express name of an angry multitude. We may therefore dismiss the proposed expedient of double representation with the remark, that if the intermediate body be elected with little reference to its electoral functions, it will be little fitted for such functions; and if it is elected mainly with reference to them, it will have no independent power of choice, but be bound over to elect the exact person whom its constituents have decided to favour.

A much more plausible proposal is suggested by the recommendation which we made some pages back,—that the principle which assigns the franchise to those who can show a property qualification should not be confined to real estate, but be extended to every kind of property that yielded an income and was owned *bonâ fide*. A considerable number of the working classes possess savings; not large, it is true, when contrasted with middle-class opulence, but still most important to, and most valued by, those who have hoarded them during a lifetime. The total accumulation is likewise very large when set down in the aggregate. It has been suggested that a suffrage conferred on the owners of moneyed property would of itself enfranchise the most thrifty and careful of the working classes; and that, as these would probably be the best judging of their class, it would be needless to inquire as to the mode in which any others could obtain the franchise. There may be a question whether we do wish simply to find representatives in the best of the working classes. We are not now seeking legislators who will exercise a correct judgment, but rather spokesmen who will express popular sentiments. We need not, however, dwell on this, as there is a more conclusive objection to the plan proposed. Unfortunately, the savings of the working classes are not invested in a form which would be suitable for political purposes. The most pressing need of the poor is a provision for failing health and for old age. They most properly endeavour to satisfy this by subscribing to "benefit societies" or other similar clubs, which, in consideration of a certain periodical payment, guarantee support during sickness, or a sum of money in case of decease. Now this life-and-health insurance wants all the criteria of a good property qualification. There is no test of its

Digitized by Google

bona fides. Simulated qualifications might be manufactured by any skilful attorney. The periodical payment might be easily repaid on pretence of sickness; and it would be perfectly impossible for any revising barrister to detect the fraud. There would be no security that the periodical premium even belonged to the poor man; it might be lent him, and with little risk, by his richer neighbour. Electioneering has conquered many difficulties. It would be easy to have an understanding that the secretary to the society, the clerk of the electioneering attorney, should see that the premium was soon repaid, in name to the poor subscriber, and in fact to the vote-making capitalist. The finances of some of these societies have never been in the best order; and there would be very great difficulty in tracking even a gross electioneering fraud. Perhaps no practical man will question but that the manipulation of a borough attorney would soon change the character of a "benefit society;" it would cease to be, as now, the repository of the real savings of the best working men; it would become a cheap and sure machinery for creating votes in the name of the most corruptible. So large a portion of the savings of thrifty operatives are most properly laid by in these insurance associations, that it is scarcely likely that a moneyed property qualification would give a vote to a considerable proportion even of the very best of them. A few would be admitted by giving the franchise to those who left a certain sum in a savings-bank for a certain time; but, to prevent fraud, that time must be considerable, and careful returns, prepared for Lord John Russell's Reform Bill, are said to show that the number enfranchised would be even fewer than might have been expected. At any rate, it would not be safe to rely on such a franchise for creating a parliamentary organ for the lower classes. Those enfranchised by it would be scattered through a hundred constituencies. There would be no certainty that even one member in the House would speak their sentiments. Moreover, we have doubts whether a constituency composed only of operatives who had a considerable sum in the savings-bank after providing, as in all likelihood they would have done, for the wants of their families in case of their death and sickness, would not rather have the feelings of petty capitalists than of skilled labourers. Those who have just risen above a class can scarcely be relied on for giving expression to its characteristic opinions. However, as it would be scarcely possible to create such a constituency, there is no reason for prolonging an anticipatory discussion on its tendencies. On the whole, therefore, we must, though rather against our wishes, discard the idea of creating a working-class franchise by an extension of the suffrage qualification to all kinds of property. A careful examination appears to show that

Digitized by Google

we could not obtain in that way a characteristic expression for the wants of the masses.

These are the principal schemes which have been proposed for adding to the legislature some proper spokesmen of the wants of the lower classes by giving to those classes *some* influence in every constituency. Our survey of them has confirmed the anticipation with which we set out. The dilemma remains. Either the influence is great enough to determine the choice of the member, or it is not: if it is not, no spokesmen for the working classes will be elected; if it is, no one not thoroughly imbued with the views and sentiments of the lower orders would be chosen,—we should have a democracy.

As this, the first of the only two possible expedients, has failed us, we resort with anxiety to the second. Since it does not seem possible to procure spokesmen for the working classes by a uniform franchise in all constituencies, is it possible to do so by a varying franchise, which shall give votes according to one criterion in one town, and to another criterion in another town? It evidently *is* possible. Whether there are any countervailing objections is a question for discussion, but of the possibility there cannot be a doubt. If all the adult males in Stafford have votes, then the member for Stafford will be elected by universal suffrage; he will be the organ of the lower orders of that place. Supposing that place to be subject in this respect to no important local anomaly, the lower orders there will be like the corresponding classes elsewhere. By taking a fair number of such towns, we may secure ourselves from the mischievous results of local irregularities; we can secure a fair number of spokesmen for the lower orders.

The scheme is not only possible, but has been tried, and in this country. Before the Reform Bill of 1832 there was a great disparity in the suffrage qualification of different constituencies. "A variety of rights of suffrage," said Sir James Mackintosh, in 1818,* "is the principle of the English representation;" and he went on to enumerate the various modes in which it might be obtained,—by freehold property, by burgage tenure, by payment of scot and lot, &c. The peculiar circumstances of 1832 made it necessary, or seemingly necessary, to abolish these contrasted qualifications. Great abuses prevailed in them, and it would have been difficult to adjust remedies for the removal of those abuses. The great requirement of the moment was a simple bill. During a semi-revolution there was no time for nice reasonings. Something universally intelligible was to be found. The enthusiasm of the country must be concentrated "on the

* *Edinburgh Review*, No. LXI., article "Universal Suffrage;" an admirable essay, singularly worth reading at present.

Digitized by Google

whole bill and nothing but the bill." We must not judge the tumult of that time by the quietude of our own.

At a calmer moment the more philosophic of liberal statesmen were, however, aware of the advantages of the machinery which they were afterwards compelled to destroy. The essay of Sir James Mackintosh, to which we have referred, appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, and was considered at the time as an authoritative exposition of liberal doctrine: and almost the whole of it is devoted to a proof that this system of varying qualification is preferable, not only to universal suffrage, but to *any* uniform "right of franchise." On the point we are particularly considering, he says: "For resistance to oppression, it is peculiarly necessary that the lower, and in some places the lowest, classes should possess the right of suffrage. Their rights would otherwise be less protected than those of any other class: for some individuals of every other class would generally find admittance into the legislature; or, at least, there is no other class which is not connected with some of its members. Some sameness of interest, and some fellow-feeling, would therefore protect every other class, even if not directly represented. But in the uneducated classes, none can either sit in a representative assembly, or be connected on an equal footing with its members. The right of suffrage, therefore, is the only means by which they can make their voice heard in its deliberations. They also often send to a representative assembly members whose character is an important element in its composition,—men of popular talents, principles, and feelings; quick in suspecting oppression, bold in resisting it; not thinking favourably of the powerful; listening, almost with credulity, to the complaints of the humble and the feeble; and impelled by ambition, where they are not prompted by generosity, to be the champions of the defenceless. It is nothing to say that such men require to be checked and restrained by others of a different character; this may be truly said of every other class. It is to no purpose to observe, that an assembly exclusively composed of them would be ill fitted for the duties of legislation; for the same observation would be perfectly applicable to any other of those bodies which make useful parts of a mixed and various assembly." Sir James had evidently the words of the member for Westminster sounding in his ears. His words are not an expression of merely speculative approbation, they are a copy from the life.

An authority still more remarkable remains. Lord John Russell, in 1821, expressed a very decided opinion on the advantages of having a different scale of property qualification in different places, and rather boldly grappled with an obvious objection to it. We quote the passage: "All parts of the country, and all

Digitized by Google

classes of the people, ought to have a share in elections. If this is not the case, the excluded part or class of the nation will become of no importance in the eyes of the rest: its favour will never be courted in the country, and its interests will never be vigilantly guarded in the legislature. Consequently, in proportion to the general freedom of the community will be the discontent excited in the deprived class by the sentence of nullity and inactivity pronounced upon them. Every system of uniform suffrage except universal contains this dark blot. And universal suffrage, in pretending to avoid it, gives the whole power to the highest and the lowest, to money and to multitude; and thus disfranchises the middle class,—the most disinterested, the most independent, and the most unprejudiced of all. It is not necessary, however, although every class ought to have an influence in elections, that every member of every class should have a vote. A butcher at Hackney, who gives his vote perhaps once in twelve years at an election for the county of Middlesex, has scarcely any advantage over another butcher at the same place who has no vote at all. And even if he had, the interest of the state is in these matters the chief thing to be consulted; and that is as well served by the suffrage of some of each class, as by that of all of each class." The necessary effect of the Act of 1832 has been to make us forget the value of what the authors of it considered a most beneficial part of our representative system. That such great statesmen should have pronounced such panegyrics on the diversity of qualifications in different constituencies, when it was a living reality before their eyes, shows at least that it is practicable and possible.

The plan is, indeed, liable to several objections: it is not to be expected that in a complicated subject any scheme which is absolutely free even from serious inconveniences could be suggested. By far the most popular objection is that which Lord John Russell noticed in the passage we have just cited. There is a sense of unfairness in the project. Why should an artisan in Liverpool have a vote, and an artisan in Macclesfield no vote? Why should the richer classes in one constituency be disfranchised by the wholesale admission of their poorer neighbours, and the richer classes in another constituency not be so disfranchised? The answer is suggested by a portion of our preceding remarks. No one has a right, as we have seen, to any portion of political power which he cannot exercise without preventing some others from exercising better that or some greater power. If all the operatives in the great towns were enfranchised, they would prevent the higher classes from exercising any power: and this is the reply to the unenfranchised artisan in Macclesfield. If there were no representatives of the working classes in Parliament, its

Digitized by Google

measures might be less beneficial, and its debates would be imperfect; the higher classes in some great towns must have less power than in some other great towns, because a uniform suffrage impedes the beneficial working of Parliament, and prevents the ruling legislature from exercising its nearly omnipotent power well and justly. To have a good Parliament, we must disfranchise some good constituents. Perhaps, indeed, the whole difficulty is overrated. We see every day that, so far as the middle classes are concerned, it is of no perceptible consequence to the individual whether he has a vote or not: it is of great consequence to him that the supreme legislature should accord with the views of his class and himself; but whether he has voted for any particular member of that legislature is a trifle. We never dream in society of asking whether the person we are talking to has a vote or not. Both live, and live equally, in the atmosphere of politics. Similarly, it is of great importance to the lower classes that their feelings should be sufficiently expressed in Parliament; but which of them votes for the person who should express them is of no consequence at all. The non-voter ought to take as much interest in politics as the voter. When *all* of a class cannot exercise power without impeding a more qualified class, we may select from considerations of convenience which members of the less qualified class are to have power. There is no injustice in allowing expediency to adjust the claims of persons similarly entitled.

It may also be objected that this plan of representing the lower classes does not give them the general instruction which the exercise of the suffrage is supposed to bestow. An unenfranchised artisan in Macclesfield is not educated by giving the suffrage to an artisan in Manchester. But it is a mistake to suppose that there is much, if any, instruction in the personal exercise of the franchise. Popular elections have no doubt a didactic influence on the community at large; they diffuse an interest in great affairs through the country; but the elevating effect of giving a vote is always infinitesimally small. Among the lower classes it is a question whether the risk of moral deterioration does not quite equally balance the hope of moral elevation. Popular institutions educate by the intellectual atmosphere which they constantly create, and not by the occasional decisions which they require. And were it otherwise, intellectual instruction is but a secondary benefit of popular government; and we must not throw away, in the hope of increasing it, the primary advantage of being well governed. We believe too that, in fact, mere existence under a good government is more instructive than the power of now and then contributing to a bad government.

Digitized by Google

We are more afraid of the objection that this inequality of suffrage in otherwise similar constituencies is an anomaly which may grow up imperceptibly, as it did before the Reform Bill, but cannot now be created *de novo*. We admit the difficulty: we are well aware that this inequality, like every other expedient in politics to which the objections are apparent and the advantages latent, is far easier to preserve than to originate. But when great interests are at stake, we should only give up that which is impossible; what is merely difficult should be done. Moreover, a little examination will, we think, show that the obstacles are far slighter than they might seem at first sight.

In this point of view it is worth remarking, that the inequality of suffrage qualification to a certain extent still exists. The operation of the Reform Act has been to hide and diminish, but not to annihilate, the inequalities which existed before. The constituencies in which these inequalities existed were naturally opposed to their abolition, and a compromise was effected. All persons duly qualified to vote on the 7th of June 1832 were to retain their right for life, subject to certain conditions of residence and registration. In all boroughs, likewise, in which freedom of the borough, whether acquired by birth or servitude prescriptively, gave a vote, that franchise was to a certain extent retained. The freemen of such boroughs have votes now just as before, and freedom can be acquired in the same way: no change on this point was effected in 1832, except that a borough franchise so obtained is forfeited by non-residence in the borough. The number of these anomalous votes is still very considerable. Mr. Newmarch has shown that in 1853 it amounted to 60,565, which is more than one-seventh of 400,000, the number (or nearly so) of borough electors at that time. We have therefore a very considerable amount of inequality in our present system; we should scarcely propose to increase it, but to distribute it more usefully.

The freemen of Coventry, Derby, Leicester, are not a class of whom we wish to undertake the defence; and in many towns the existence of those old rights is a recognised nuisance. We are not prepared to approve *all* anomalies in our representation. Our principles are especially opposed to the enfranchisement of favoured individuals in minor towns—few enough to be bought, corruptible enough to wish to be bought,—who are not in general the majority of the constituency, but who exercise important influence because they can throw in a purchasable balance of votes on critical occasions; who are in no respect fair representatives of the working classes, who do not return to the house a single fit person willing to be spokesman for them. We argue only that the effect of the Act of 1832 has been to diminish the in-

Digitized by Google

equality of suffrage qualification before existing; and by no means to establish, even if a single act of parliament could have so done, the erroneous principle that there is to be no inequality.

But the most effectual way of showing that it is possible to create *de novo* a beneficial variety of property qualifications, is to point out how it can be done. If it be admitted that we should found working-class constituencies, it is clear that we should found them where the working classes live. This is of course in the great seats of industry, where work is plentiful and constant. Those who reside in such towns are likewise the most political part of the class: the agricultural labourers, scattered in rural parishes, with low wages and little knowledge, have no views and no sentiments which admit of parliamentary expression; they have no political thoughts. If we wish to give due expression, and not more than due expression, to the ideas of the democracy, we must select some few of the very largest towns, where its characteristic elements are most congregated. It would have been more fortunate if these towns had acquired such a franchise prescriptively; but it would have been all but miraculous if such had been the case. Many of our greatest towns are situated in what, in more purely agricultural times, were very uninfluential districts; we must not expect an hereditary franchise for newly-created interests. As it is necessary to have a rule of selection, the best which can be suggested is the rule of population; we would propose, therefore, that in the very largest towns in England* there should be what Mr. Bright advocates for all towns, a rate-paying franchise. If this were extended to all towns having more than 75,000 inhabitants, it would include London, Liverpool, Manchester, the Tower Hamlets, Marylebone, Finsbury, Bristol, Birmingham, Lambeth, Westminster, Leeds, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, Southwark, Greenwich, Bradford, Newcastle-on-Tyne,

* It may, indeed, be objected that these large constituencies are just the ones in which a rate-paying franchise would have the most conclusively democratic effect; and that if we concede it as to these, it is not worth while to resist it with respect to others in which we might hope, by the influence of wealth and social standing, to counteract more or less its democratic tendency. But facts show that in an immense number of constituencies these influences could not control that tendency effectually. If an act giving votes to all rate-payers be ever passed, it will probably be accompanied by a readjustment of the electoral districts on a democratic principle, which would augment the influence of mere numbers. But we need not consider this, since the introduction of the rate-paying franchise into our present constituencies would introduce a new element, much too large to be easily managed by indirect influences. It is of course not known exactly how large that new element would be; but very careful tables have been compiled of the number of inhabited houses in our present boroughs; and as the number of women rated in respect of them is no doubt small, all but a minute fraction of such houses would give a qualification to a male voter. Now it appears that in all except ten borough constituencies the number of inhabited houses was in 1852, and doubtless is still, more than double that of the present electors; and consequently the *new* element which would be introduced would greatly pre-

Digitized by Google

and Salford. If there were a *bonâ-fide* representation of the working classes in these towns, they could not complain of a class disfranchisement; there would be adequate spokesmen for them. A member speaking the voice of places where such numbers of operatives are congregated, could speak the sentiments of that class with authority. No one could be unaware that the constituency in these large towns was ultra-democratic. The representation of the lower orders would be conspicuous as well as effectual.

Nor would the number of representatives so given to the lower classes be sufficient to deteriorate the general character of the legislature. It would not amount to forty for England and Wales, or to fifty for the United Kingdom; a considerable number, no doubt, but not sufficient to destroy the representative character of a house of 658 members. The House of Commons would still represent the educated classes as a whole; its opinion would still be their opinion; the performance of its ruling function would be unimpaired; and that of its expressive function would be improved.

We have dwelt so long on this part of our subject, that we shall not be able to devote as much space as we could wish to the explanation of the mode in which we think the remaining defects of our representative system should be remedied. We can only state briefly a few of the most important considerations.

The first of those defects, which we specified at the outset, is

ponderate over, and in fact disfranchise, the old. It is evident that it would be very difficult to manage so many new voters by any indirect influences. We copy the table for two counties, Cornwall and Lancashire.

	Electors.	*Inhabited Houses.*
Cornwall.		
Bodmin	390	1,103
Helston	809	1,459
Launceston	438	1,051
Liskeard	372	965
Penryn and Falmouth	856	2,073
St. Ives	536	2,003
Truro	646	2,194
Lancashire.		
Ashton-under-Lyne	1,085	5,346
Blackburn	1,518	7,919
Bolton	1,933	10,394
Bury	1,218	5,825
Clitheroe	457	2,192
Oldham	2,098	13,658
Lancaster	1,328	2,891
Rochdale	1,255	5,829
Warrington	720	4,380
Wigan	797	5,686

—*Edwards's Statistical Tables*, p. 6.

Digitized by Google

the existence of small boroughs, which are either in the hands of individual proprietors or have become in the process of time nests of corruption. We need not specify examples; the fact is sufficiently familiar. Indeed, all small boroughs in the course of years must rapidly tend towards one or other of these fates. A great deal of wealth in this country seeks to invest itself politically. A small borough of this sort necessarily contains a considerable number of corruptible individuals; year by year skilful parliamentary agents ascertain who these individuals are, and buy them. The continual temptation is too much for shop-keeping humanity; with every election the number of purchasable votes tends to increase: one would not have yielded, only he wanted a new shop-front; another, who is proof against plate-glass, desires money to put out his son in the world. Gradually an atmosphere of corruption closes over the borough, and men of the world cease to expect purity from it. The only way in which this sort of retail purchase can be escaped is by a wholesale purchase. A rich proprietor may buy a large majority of the vote-conferring properties in the borough, and so become despotic in the town. Each presentation (to borrow a phrase from the church) is not in that case sold on the day of election, because the advowson has been bought before by some one who has a use for it.

We may escape, then, the necessity of ascertaining the electoral corruption of particular boroughs, and lay it down as a general condition of permanent purity that a constituency should contain a fixed number—five hundred suppose—electors. It is quite true that this remedy is not certainly effectual: there are many boroughs, where the enfranchised constituency exceed this number, in which the elections are not at all what we should wish. But the tendency of such a measure is plain. It prevents the wholesale purchase by the neighbouring proprietors, because it makes the property too large for all ordinary wealth to buy. It *tends* to prevent the retail purchase by increasing the supply of votes,—which always lessens their market value, and in very many cases reduces it below the price which will tempt ordinary voters to corruption. The expedient is not a perfectly effectual one, but at the least it is a considerable palliative.

What, then, is to be done with boroughs below the prescribed limits? There are in England and Wales about sixty-seven members, elected by forty-two of such boroughs. What course would it be wisest to take with respect to such seats? The most easy plan in theory is to annihilate them at once, to have a new schedule A of places disfranchised. But it is easier to write such a recommendation in an essay than to carry the enactment in practice. These seats have the protective instincts of property.

Digitized by Google

Money has been spent on many of them for a course of years: in all of them the present electors would vote nearly as a man against the abolition of "themselves." The strenuous resistance of the members for such seats must be expected to any bill which should propose to abolish them *in toto*. And such resistance would be the more effectual, because in all likelihood it would be indirect. The interested members, unless a sinister policy were unusually wanting in its characteristic acuteness, would not risk a division on the unpleasant question of abolishing or not abolishing their own seats. They would throw the probably decisive weight of their votes into the scale most inconvenient to the government proposing that abolition; would combine with every strong opposition to it; in the present state of parties would soon reduce it to a minority. A proposal to disfranchise many boroughs would soon issue in the resignation of the proposing government.

We must therefore assume that for the present, to some considerable extent, the influence of such boroughs must continue to exist. In 1832 there was a popular feeling which carried every thing before it. Now all we can hope to carry is a compromise. As a compromise, the best expedient which we can suggest is to combine such boroughs. The English respect for vested interests would preclude the popularity of a sweeping act; but the English liking for a moderate expedient would be a strong support to any measure that could be so called. The effect of such a combination would probably be in great part to set the joint constituency free from the yoke of great proprietors. If Lord A is supreme in borough *a*, and Mr. B in town *b*, *a* and *b* combined will probably be controlled by neither. The local feeling of *b* will resist Lord A; that of *a* would be rigid to the enticements of Mr. B. If one of the boroughs should be "independent," that is to say, purchased voter by voter at each election, its inhabitants would probably rather be purchased by any one than by the proprietor of the antagonistic borough. We are aware that these are not very attractive considerations; but what are we to do? *ils ont des canons*. We must make the best terms we can with constituencies which we cannot hope entirely to destroy.

We shall be asked why we group these existing boroughs with one another, instead of combining them with new towns not now possessed of the borough franchise, which are therefore at present comparatively uncorrupt. We admit that, in some individual cases, there may be conclusive reasons for taking the latter course; but we think that there are political arguments which should disincline us from adopting it in general.

We saw reason to believe that the principal defects of our

Digitized by Google

House of Commons, as a *ruling* assembly, were an excessive bias to the landed interest, and an insufficient sympathy with the growing interests of the country. On this account it is desirable not to take from the county constituencies all the liberalising element which they at present possess; on the contrary, it would be desirable, if possible, to increase it. We should, however, weaken that liberal element very materially if, in our extreme desire to remedy borough corruption, we extracted from the constituency of the counties the inhabitants of all their larger towns. The effect of Mr. Locke King's proposal to reduce the county franchise from 50*l.* to 10*l.*, if it should be adopted, as it probably will be, will be to augment the county influence of the towns which have no borough member.* We must not counteract this tendency. As we think it desirable to diminish the *sectarian* character of our county members, we must not adopt the most effectual of all schemes for preserving it unimpaired—we must not absorb into the boroughs all other influences save those of the country gentlemen.

Our second reason for rather preferring to combine the very small boroughs with one another than to unite each of them with some town at present unenfranchised is, that we wish to diminish the number of seats for such constituencies. If we annexed new elements to each of them, there would be a plausible argument for not diminishing their number. But, as has been explained, we wish to provide a more ample representation for the growing districts of the country; and there is a very general and well-grounded opinion that the House of Commons is already quite sufficiently numerous. In order, therefore, to increase the representation of the progressive parts of England in the proportion which seems desirable, we must take from the decaying or stationary towns of the less active parts of the country the right of sending members which they have now. On a great scale, the same plan was adopted in 1832: it was then necessary to remedy a great evil; and therefore it was necessary that the number of seats disfranchised should be great, and the number of newly-enfranchised towns considerable also. As we have shown, no such enormous evil remains at present to be remedied. The judgment of Parliament coincides fairly, if not precisely, with the opinion of the nation. All we have to correct is, a slight bias in one direction, and a perceptible but not extreme

* The general effect of Mr. Locke King's proposal is a *quæstio vexata*. One point may be, however, laid down with confidence: its effect will probably be more favourable to the petty proprietor than to the large ones. The estates of the larger are not usually cut up into farms yielding less than 10*l.* rent. The small occupier generally rents of the small proprietor. Possibly the effect of this circumstance, likewise, may be to mitigate the class peculiarities of our county members. The quarter-sessions influence varies on the average.

Digitized by Google

deficiency of sympathy in another. The changes we have to make, therefore, may be slight in comparison with those of 1832; still, so important is it that Parliament should really coincide in opinion with the nation, that we should take account of the beginnings of a discrepancy; while the topic of reform in our electoral system is definitely before the public, we should take the opportunity of correcting the undue inclination of the legislature towards the less active, and its contrast of feeling (which though slight is real) to the more active part of the community.

We are the more certain that it is advisable to make some such change as this, because, as we have before observed, we believe this uneasy consciousness of the less perfect representation of the progressive elements in the nation, as compared with the unprogressive, to be the secret source of almost all the slight popular enthusiasm which now exists in favour of reform. The external form of what is proposed is, indeed, different; the principal, as well as the most popular, suggestion is one for the representation of the working classes. We have no doubt that those who are at the head of that movement, as well as those who join in it, quite believe that such is their true object. But it is at least an odd undertaking to be headed by master manufacturers. Whatever view we may take of the effects of universal or of rate-paying franchise on other parts of the nation, there can be little question that its influence would be detrimental to the power of opulent capitalists. We must alter the world before there ceases to be some opposition of feeling (there is often a momentary opposition of *interest*) between the mill-owner and his work-people. In the days of the short-time agitation both parties understood this perfectly. Even now a Parliament of capitalists would probably propose to repeal the ten-hours bill; a Parliament of working men would very likely desire to extend its principle. To say the least, it is strange that the characteristic men of one class should be so ready to throw all power into the hands of the other.

A letter from Mr. Bright himself to a Manchester association puts the matter in a different light. "On a great occasion," he tells us, "like the one now before the country, there will be differences of opinion. Some think one extent of franchise better than another. Some are for a 6*l.* rental; some are for a 5*l.* rental; you are for the extension of the right of voting to every man. Now I prefer to establish the parliamentary suffrage on the basis which has been tried for some centuries in our parishes, and which has been adopted at a recent period in our poor-law unions and in our municipal governments; with some needless restriction, with regard to the municipal franchise, which I would not introduce into our parliamentary franchise. The more public

Digitized by Google

opinion is freely and honestly expressed, the more distinctly will a government, engaged in preparing a Reform Bill, be able to discover which is the point likely to be most satisfactory to the public. I consider these differences of opinion on the subject as of trifling importance when compared with the question of the distribution of seats and members. *This is the vital point in the coming bill;* and unless it be well watched, you may get any amount of suffrage, and yet find, after all, that you have lost the substance, and are playing merely with the shadow of popular representation."

This at least is an intelligible doctrine. A redistribution of seats in proportion to population would indisputably be most advantageous to Mr. Bright and his associates. Some of their school have made a calculation that sixty-three boroughs, returning eighty-five members, have not, taken together, as many electors as Manchester, which returns but two. And, independently of extreme cases, it is quite indisputable that the large towns and crowded populations of Lancashire and the West Riding would, in any grouping based on electoral numbers, assume a proportionate magnitude that would be quite different from that which they have at present. If such a readjustment could be carried, *and the present franchise retained,* the followers of Mr. Bright would be one of the most numerous divisions of the House of Commons. It is true that the advantage of their success must be shared with the class most antagonistic to them in feeling. The county representation would have to be extended if electoral numbers, or any mere numbers, were to be taken as the guide to a new adjustment. But Mr. Bright probably does not fear a conflict with Mr. Newdegate. We can well understand that he should esteem the lowering of the franchise, which would impair his power, less important than a reapportionment of members, which must increase it.

We can spare but a few words to show the unsoundness of the principle on which the proposed readjustment is to be based; and we would hope that only a few words are needed. Mr. Bright considers it an obvious absurdity that a constituency of 1000 electors should return a member, and that another constituency with 5000 should return but one member also. Such a variety is nevertheless *primâ facie* beneficial: it would be a probable sign of the complete imperfection of an electoral organisation if every constituency in it were equally numerous. All such systems must tend to give undue preponderance to some classes, and to deny, not only substantial influence, but even bare expression, to the views of other classes. If the nation be homogeneous, equal patches of population will tend to return similar members. The more numerous the constituency, the more likely

Digitized by Google

is this to be the result. Thousand A *may* differ from Thousand B; but Million A will assuredly be identical with Million B. The doctrine of chances forbids us to expect contrasted representatives from constituencies with a family likeness. If, indeed, the nation should not be homogeneous, but should contain two very numerous classes of unlike tendencies, whose harmony is preserved by the continual arbitration of less numerous classes intermediate between them, the result of an equal division of electoral districts would be different, and it would be worse. Each of the intermediate classes would be merged in one of the larger. We may, however, look at the living operation, and not at the bare theory. We have mentioned the contrast between Mr. Bright and Mr. Newdegate. What is it that prevents the continual disturbance of parliamentary peace between two classes of men so dissimilar as the members for counties—especially purely agricultural counties—and members for manufacturing cities? Obviously the existence of the intermediate elements, of members sent up by agricultural towns, which contain industrial elements, and by smaller manufacturing towns, which have no notion of being offered in sacrifice to the populace of great cities. An electoral system composed of "population sections" would not give us a representative assembly adapted to the performance of either of its two functions. A House of Commons so elected would not represent the public opinion of the country, and therefore could not rule it as it should be ruled. The impartial and arbitrating element would be deficient. And, as has been explained, this complete deficiency in the qualities necessary to a ruling legislature would not be compensated by any excellence in the qualities necessary to secure a good expression of the grievances and opinions of all classes. Old English good sense selected a town to send representatives separately from a county in which it was situated because it saw there the conspicuous focus of separate feelings, separate interests, possibly separate complaints. Our new reformers would undo this wise arrangement. They would (at least, such is the logical tendency of their argument) destroy those bounds and limits to constituencies which secure a *character* to the constituency; they would represent the shipping interest by throwing Hull into the county of York and Grimsby into the county of Lincoln: distinct definition is all that is necessary to disprove such ideas.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the evident untenableness of Mr. Bright's views gives them a claim on our attention. It is an indication of social unsoundness that men of ability and energy sincerely advocate very absurd theories, and are able to collect considerable audiences to applaud those theories. We may speak of our national contentment; but the answer comes, What, then,

Digitized by Google

do these people complain of? We must not rest satisfied with a mere refutation of the doctrines which are avowed, or an exposition of the mischievous consequences of the plans proposed. There are certain theories of political philosophy which supply ready arguments against almost every state of society which has been able to maintain a long existence. These heresies float among the most ordinary ideas of mankind, and are ready without the least research to the hand of whoever may believe that he wants them. Latent discontent with the existing form of government catches hastily at whatever justifies it; it seeks in these old forms of false doctrine a logical basis for itself. One of these heresies is the purely democratic theory of government; it has very rarely indeed been adopted as a guide to action, but its existence is nearly as old as political speculation. In every age and country a class which has not so much power as it thinks it ought to have snatches at the notion that all classes ought to have equal power. Such an "uneasy class" believes that it ought to have as much power as the class which is in possession; and not liking to put forward even to itself a selfish claim of individual merit, it tries to found its pretensions on the "equal rights of all mankind." Mr. Burke described the first East-Indian nabobs as "Jacobins almost to a man," because they did not find their social position "proportionate to their new wealth." We cannot fail to observe that the new business-wealth of the present day (of which Mr. Bright is the orator and mouthpiece) has a tendency to democracy for the same reason. Such a symptom in the body-politic is an indication of danger. So energetic a class as the creators of Manchester need to be conciliated; their active intelligence has rights which assuredly it will make heard. The great political want of our day is a *capitalist conservatism*. If we could enlist the intelligent creators of wealth in the ranks of those who would give their due influence to intelligence and property, we should have almost secured the stability of our constitution; we should have pacified its most dangerous assailants; we should count them among our most active allies. If the transfer of a moderate number of seats in Parliament from boroughs, which scarcely profess to exercise an independent choice of representatives, to large and growing towns would only in a subordinate degree conduce to this effect, such a transfer should be made. There would still be enough of smaller constituencies for all purposes that are useful.

We have, therefore, completed our task. We have shown the defects which our present system of representation seems to contain; and we have endeavoured to indicate the mode in which those defects might, we think, be remedied. The subject is one of great complexity and extent, and very difficult to discuss

Digitized by Google

within the limits of an article. To be considered profitably, it must be considered as a whole; and it will be evident from our own pages how much space any attempt to discuss the entire topic necessarily requires. Whatever errors of detail may be found in our opinions, we cannot doubt that our general purpose has been correct. A real statesman at the present day must endeavour to augment the influence of the growing parts of the nation, as compared with the stationary; to augment the influence of the capitalist classes, but to withstand the pernicious theories which some of them for the moment advocate; to organise an expression for the desires of the lower orders, but to withstand even the commencement of a democratic revolution.

Digitized by Google

BOOKS OF THE QUARTER SUITABLE FOR READING-SOCIETIES.

The Limits of Religious Thought examined, being the Bampton Lectures for 1858. By the Rev. H. L. Mansel, B.D. Murray.

[Reviewed in Article IX.]

Lectures and Addresses on Literary and Social Topics. By the late Rev. F. W. Robertson, of Brighton. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[Noticed in Article VII.]

Historic Notes on the Books of the Old and New Testament. By Samuel Sharpe. Second Edition. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[A learned and sensible book.]

The Emancipation of Faith. By the late Henry Edward Schedel, M.D. 2 vols. Trübner and Co.

[A ponderous work, which, as it has only just appeared, we have not yet had time to examine carefully. It is remarkable as expressing the devout convictions of a mind evidently independent and learned, educated in the school of physiological science, accepting cordially the Positive Philosophy, and yet combining all with a deep faith in human Free Will and Christian Revelation.]

History of the Literature of Greece, from the Manuscript of the late Professor K. O. Müller; continued after the author's death by John William Donaldson, D.D. 3 vols. J. W. Parker and Son.

The History of Herodotus. A new English Version, edited, with Notes and Essays, by the Rev. G. Rawlinson, M.A.; assisted by Col. Sir Henry Rawlinson, K.C.B., and Sir J. G. Wilkinson, F.R.S. Vol. 3. Murray.

Henry the Third, King of France, his Court and Times. By Miss Freer. 3 vols. Hurst and Blackett.

History of the Affghans. By J. P. Ferrier. Translated from the original Manuscript by Captain William Jesse. Murray.

The Life of John Milton, narrated in connection with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of his Time. By David Masson, M.A. Vol. 1. Macmillan.

Digitized by Google

Fragmentary Remains, Literary and Scientific, of Sir Humphrey Davy, Bart. Edited by his brother John Davy, M.D., F.R.S. Churchill.

[A valuable and very amusing book, containing many fine extracts from Coleridge's correspondence.]

Life of James Watt. By James P. Muirhead, M.A. Murray.

Memoirs of Thomas Uwins, R.A. By Miss Uwins. 2 vols. Longmans.

The Life of Douglas Jerrold. By his son Blanchard Jerrold. Kent and Co.

The Life of the Rev. Henry Stedman Polehampton, M.A., Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford. Edited by his brothers the Rev. Edward Polehampton, M.A., and the Rev. Thomas Stedman Polehampton, M.A. Bentley.

[A book of considerable interest, as concerning one of the Chaplains in the garrison of Lucknow. The subject of the memoir belonged to a somewhat narrow school of religious conviction, but his mind was so real and simple that this does not painfully obtrude itself on the reader.]

Memoirs of William Beckford, of Fonthill, author of "Vathek." 2 vols. Skeet.

England and India; an Essay on the Duty of Englishmen towards the Hindoos. By Baptist W. Noel, M.A. J. Nisbet and Co.

China; being the *Times* Special Correspondence in 1857-58. Reprinted by permission. With Corrections and Additions by the author, George Wingrove Cooke. Routledge.

[A work of the very highest interest and value, notwithstanding the light style in which it is written.]

Creoles and Coolies; or, Five Years in the Mauritius. By the Rev. Patrick Beaton, M.A. Nisbet and Co.

Sketches of Algeria during the Kabyle War. By H. M. Walmsley. Chapman and Hall.

Four Months in Algeria: with a Visit to Carthage. By the Rev. J. W. Blakesley. Macmillan.

Three Visits to Madagascar, during 1853, 1854, and 1856; including a Journey to the Capital. By the Rev. William Ellis, F.H.S. Murray.

From New York to Delhi. By Robert B. Minturn, jun. Longmans.

[A book of thought and acute personal observation, containing an American's estimate of British India and its government.]

Digitized by Google

A Summer and Winter in the Two Sicilies. By Julia Kavanagh. 2 vols. Hurst and Blackett.

Mollhausen's Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coast of the Pacific. Translated by Mrs. Percy Sinnett. 2 vols. Longmans.

Fiji and the Fijians: the Islands and their Inhabitants. By Thomas Williams. 2 vols. Heylin.

The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps: a Tour throughout all the romantic and less frequented "Vals" of Northern Piedmont. By the Rev. S. W. King, M.A. Murray.

Leaders in Literature: with a Notice of Traditional Errors affecting them. By Thomas De Quincey. Hogg and Son.

On Colour, Form, and Proportion; and on the Necessity for a Diffusion of Taste among all Classes. By Sir J. G. Wilkinson. Murray.

[The style of this book is somewhat heavy, but the information and thought of the author are of great value, and the illustrations splendid.]

The Master-Builder's Plan; or, the Principles of Organic Architecture, as indicated in the Typical Forms of Animals. By George Ogilvie, M.D. Longmans.

Locke and Sydenham. By John Brown, M.D. Hamilton and Adams.

[A collection of entertaining fugitive essays, evincing more strictly literary insight than grasp of thought.]

Almæ Matres. By Megathym Splene, B.A. Oxon. Hogg and Co.

Ionica. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[There is true poetry in this little volume,—poetry of Mr. Arnold's school. There are, however, several pieces unworthy of publication.]

The Courtship of Miles Standish, and other Poems. By W. H. Longfellow. Kent and Co.

[Noticed in Article VIII.]

The Scouring of the White Horse; or, the Long-Vacation Ramble of a London Clerk. By the Author of "Tom Brown's School-days." Illustrated by Doyle. Macmillan.

[The pictures of Berkshire scenery are very fresh and beautiful, and the book, as a whole, pleasant. Perhaps the character of the London clerk is somewhat conventional.]

What will he do with it? By Pisistratus Caxton. 4 vols. W. Blackwood.

My Lady: a Tale of Modern Life. 2 vols. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[A tale of some power, but not very agreeable or artistic.]

Digitized by Google

Sylvan Holt's Daughter. By Holme Lee. 3 vols. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[The sketch of the heroine is very careful and vigorous in the earlier part. The book is unequally and hurriedly written in its later portion.]

An Old Debt. By Florence Dawson. 2 vols. Smith, Elder, and Co.

Bartholomew Fair. By Henry Morley. Chapman and Hall.

[This book, having only just appeared, it is impossible as yet to form any judgment on the literary execution. It appears to be extremely entertaining. The illustrations are numerous, good, exceedingly quaint, and faithful copies, we are told, of the woodcuts, &c., from which they are taken.]

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE NATIONAL REVIEW.

APRIL 1859.

SIR E. B. LYTTON, NOVELIST, PHILOSOPHER, AND POET.

The Novels and Romances of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. 20 vols. London: Routledge and Co. 1858.

What will he do with it? 4 vols. Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons. 1859.

The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. 5 vols. London: Chapman and Hall.

What will he do with it? and *My Novel* are Sir Bulwer Lytton's last and best works. This is no small distinction. It is a remarkable thing for a man to write some twenty books of imaginative fiction, and yet to retain a vigour of mind and a freshness of imagination capable of making new efforts which not only equal but surpass the first fruits of his genius. It is true these works and *The Caxtons* are not so much his own as some of his previous writings; but perhaps they are not altogether the worse for that. Grafted on a stock of Sterne or Dickens, they flourish with a new energy, and bloom with a fairness and completeness which the scion on its own roots had never attained to. *Pelham* alone of his earlier works enters into rivalry with his last two novels; while it contrasts with them in being preëminently his own. A first work—for *Falkland* was but an abortive attempt—is almost always more characteristic than any later one of the mind of the writer. There he does not spare himself; he brings into play all his energies, is lavish of all his resources, and gives a glimpse of every facet of his mind. His powers may afterwards develop in particular directions, and the proportions originally indicated no longer be

Digitized by Google

preserved; but the man himself and the characteristics of his genius will generally be more compendiously illustrated in the first work which really has called out his full powers than in any subsequent one. And since *Pelham* first startled and pleased the world of novel-readers with its brisk witticisms, its sharp sarcasms and lively caricatures, its clever descriptions and skilful narrative, and annoyed them by its hardness, its affectations, and its pseudo-sentiment, every subsequent work has reflected the same merits and the same defects. But the circle of merits has widened, if that of defects has not contracted. What a world of patient industry, what an indefatigable striving to make the most of his vocation, what an uphill energy all these novels display! Never was man more true to his calling of artist than Bulwer has been. No hasty slipshod productions have ever disgraced his powers. The love of fame is his darling passion; but no success has ever deluded him into believing that the wreath was safely grasped, and that he might sink into indolent security. Much of this zeal is due, no doubt, to the high estimate which the author has formed to himself of the influence and position of a novel-writer. He seems really to have persuaded himself that to write good romances is the highest achievement of the human intellect; possibly inferior to that of producing a great epic poem, but certainly by no other effort to be rivalled in its beneficial influence, or in its claims upon the gratitude of mankind. It is natural for a man somewhat to overrate the importance of his own sphere of activity; but it is obvious enough that Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's judgment has been led further astray than it should have been by the fact that he has been successful in light literature, and attempted at least to write an epic poem. He exaggerates preposterously the influence of a novel-writer. He makes the wide diffusion which naturally belongs to entertaining writing, and the permanence which is inherent in printer's ink, too much the measure of the merit of a writer. An artist in written words owes much to the materials in which he works; and this is to be taken into account when we judge of different classes of minds by the results of their labours. It requires a far higher mind and nature altogether, faculties better balanced, wider reasoning powers, broader energies, more exact and extended knowledge, and a more capacious and active intellect, to be a great statesman than to hold any but the very highest places in the hierarchy of literature: but the name and the thoughts of even a moderately good novel-writer will be, and long remain, familiar to a large number of minds; while the renown of the statesman is merged in new claims to attention as soon as he ceases to have a personal

Digitized by Google

control over affairs. His name, indeed, may survive, but his labours perish from remembrance, as one wave yields to another, and its force is only seen in the gradual advance of the whole tide. Modern experience has proved, that the power of expressing feelings and reproducing character with a truthfulness and skill greater than Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton has attained to, is any thing but a rare gift, and it is the fashion to accord it a place much higher than that to which either its rareness or its intrinsic value entitle it. And not only the artist but his work is apt to be over-estimated, at least in one direction. It is the high function of art to refine and elevate the mind; to raise us above base pleasures and low-thoughted cares; to make beauty familiar,—beauty, whose gracious privilege it is that something of herself shall pass into those who habitually contemplate her. But the moving power of life—the will—art has little power to influence, and the artist mistakes his aim and arrogates too high a function when he assumes for his arbitrary creations the power to mould the heart and guide the actions of men. Realities alone have this power; and art only so far as it reproduces actual existences, past or present, or at least is believed to do so. The life of a great man, the experiences of a living spirit, have a powerful influence on other minds; they excite sympathy, admiration, emulation; the records of other men's actions control our own, the sight of their activity stimulates ours; their patience makes patience easier to us; their fortitude strengthens our power to bear. Is it so of the creations of the poet? We doubt it. Sometimes, indeed, consummate genius seems to introduce us to actual lives; but even then it has a less power over us for practical consequences than when some dauber heightens the colouring of facts. Has *Hamlet* or *Jack Sheppard* produced the greater number of actions?

We approach every work of art in two ways—either in sympathy with the artist, or in sympathy with the subject of his art; the two feelings mingle, and it is with a mixed admiration of the skill of the master, of the beautiful whole he has evolved, and of pity for the imploring mother, that we gaze on the statue of Niobe. But the mode in which we indulge our emotions under the influence of a work of art has, and always ought to have in it, something different from that stir of the feelings which acts immediately and powerfully upon the will. We do not say it cannot influence the will, or that it never does; but that in most men, and most in those who are capable of the highest pleasure in art, it is a sort of movement in subordination to the æsthetic faculty, a sort of voluntary submission to emotion with an undefined consciousness that it is not

Digitized by Google

pure and simple feeling we experience, but feeling excited for the sake of the pleasure there is in the movement of the feelings. We know it is not real, we know it does not demand action, that with all its vividness the poet's creation is a fantasy. When, in that scene which for appalling suspense is the masterpiece of the master-poet,—when Macbeth "towards his design creeps like a ghost," and his wife stands in his absence whispering her strained anticipations of the event,—our hearts, it is true, swell in our breasts, our blood stands still, we cease to breathe; but our instinct is not to rush forward and prevent; our excitement, however great, is one which permits us quietly to abide the issue. It is only the ignorant man who thinks Garrick in Richard the Third is a villain; and in proportion as we lose the sense of the presence of the controlling art, does the sculptor, the painter, or the poet exercise a lower influence upon us. It may be even said that the simple excitement of the feelings, unaccompanied by the sort of intellectual contemplation which mingles with their movement in every legitimate enjoyment of a work of art, is rather hurtful than beneficial. For the true end of emotion is action, and to raise emotions and let them sink undirected to their purposes is weakening to the will and exhausting to the feelings themselves. Pruriency is a degraded word; but some analogous word, applicable to the whole range of moral sentiments, would express the temper which takes pleasure in what we describe. Sentimentalism is a part of it. But art, as we have said, interposes a sort of intellectual screen between the passion and the will; and this is the true sense in which art chastens the passions. It is not that sympathy with fictitious emotions refines their general exercise in the man who has happened to read *Othello;* it is that the passion which has been raised in him while he reads is a chastened passion, one detached from its natural alliance with action, and experienced with the consciousness that it is so detached. When we consider, however, how much of our light literature seeks its hold upon the reader, not in the poetic presentment of feeling, but in the attempt to raise the actual feeling, and how vast a number of readers there are who find their pleasure in the mere emotion,—in a sort of titillation of the heart at once objectless and untransmuted by the influence of art,—we must make some deduction from the ennobling influence which the enthusiasm of Sir Bulwer Lytton somewhat too largely ascribes to the study of novels.

There are doubtless other resources within the scope of prose fiction by which it may inform and elevate its readers. It may be made a treasury of the author's wisdom; it may from its fidelity to nature give us fresh knowledge of the world

Digitized by Google

about us. It is Sir B. Lytton's ambition to give the world the full advantages of his art in both these directions; it is his misfortune to be but indifferently qualified for so doing. Nature has not endowed him with the power to think deeply or justly, or to see with a clear eye and reproduce with a faithful imagination. She meant him neither for a philosopher nor a poet; and it is to be regretted that he should always have sought to make most prominent the most defective sides of his genius. Patiently to endeavour to supply the deficiencies of our nature is doubtless laudable; to give prominence to them is unwise. Sir Bulwer Lytton is very unfortunate in this respect. He is determined to be what he is not; and his readers suffer for it. Even in his prefaces you hear him screaming, "I *will* be a philosopher; I *am* a great poet;" and his only difficulty as to those who disagree with him is as to whether they are most knave or fool. It is a standing puzzle to him to decide whether it is the ignorance or the malignity of his critics which blinds them to his merits in these respects. It is perhaps this constant straining after a false position which more than any one thing gives to his works a certain air of charlatanism. Of course we do not mean that he is destitute of imagination, or incapable of reflection; but he is not gifted with the higher kinds or degrees of either poetic insight or poetic expression, and it is rarely indeed that his thoughts are at once clear and profound. Yet he has a great affluence of mind within certain limits, and a great skill in making the most of his resources. The water is not deep, but abundant enough; the mischief is that the bottom is muddy, and he will always be stirring it. Closely connected with these deficiencies is the subservience of all he writes to display. In spite of every thing that is urged in his prefaces as to the moral and philosophical designs of his various works, it is impossible to read them without feeling that these designs yield not only to the exigencies of life-like representation, but are too often entirely subordinated to the more immediate and less defensible one of brilliancy of effect. Philosophy and poetry are not valued for their own sake; they are machinery and materials for turning out fine writings. No man who really wished to discover truths, who really had an insight into nature, could deal with language in the way Sir Bulwer Lytton does. It is not uncommon for him to make a grandiloquent assertion, which you may exactly transpose, and it shall be impossible to say in which form it is the more false or the more trite. We are told, for instance, in the last novel, that, "Let a king and a beggar converse freely together, and it is the beggar's fault if he does not say something which makes the king lift his hat to him." Examine such an asser-

Digitized by Google

tion, and it is mere wind; or, if it have meaning, it is false. What command of mental resources have beggars in general which should induce the respect of kings? And, granting that it only depends on themselves to have and exercise them, they would not educe this sort of testimony to their value. We don't lift our hats to men for what they say; it is for what they are. The phrase would be more true read backwards: "Let a king and a beggar converse freely together, and the mere sayings of the king can never make the beggar lift his hat to him." He tells us that "all faculties that can make greatness contain those that can attain goodness." "Nothing," we learn in another place, "is more polished, nothing more cold, than that wisdom which is the work of former tears, of former passions, and is formed within a musing and solitary mind." Nothing can be less true than that former tears, former passions, and musing habits, have a tendency to make wisdom cold; rather the reverse. It depends on the other features of the character; and this is an illustration of the nature of a great many of Bulwer's pseudo-philosophical observations. You can't say whether they are true or false; there is a want of legitimate consequence in his assertions; they are logically incomplete. If I say, "Men in brown clothes eat large breakfasts," or, to use language more in keeping with that of our author, "The arrayed in fuscous integuments is the devourer of the matutinal repast," I hazard nothing. I seem to say something, but in reality I say nothing. I do but give my reader a choice whether I say an untruth or a truism. It would be false to say that all men in brown clothes eat large breakfasts, or that the browner a man's coat the greater his appetite; but my real expression, though it conveys this sort of impression to the careless reader, may be equally well construed to speak only of some men, and then fades into a harmless truism. So we are told in *What will he do with it?* that "Genius and Resolve have three grand elements in common,—Patience, Hope, Concentration." What a world of confusion of thought is displayed in that little sentence! The very selection of the two things for comparison bears evidence of a mind not particular as to the clearness of its own operations; and as to the force of the assertion, not one of the three qualities is necessarily inherent in either of the two things between which they are asserted to form a ground of common nature. The vanity of mind which condescends to this sort of sham thoughts is like that of the person which submits to the adornment of paste brilliants; they are not only unreal, but so very cheap. Even the particular observation in hand admits of endless multiplication. We may say, Intellect and hesitation have three grand elements in

Digitized by Google

common, — doubts, difficulties, and vacillation; or, Men and running have three grand elements in common,—legs, exertion, and progression; and so on *ad infinitum*.

But we have not space to illustrate at any length the peculiar felicities of our author's philosophical observations. The discussion on knowledge between the Parson, Riccabocca, and Leonard, in *My Novel*, affords perhaps the most compendious example of them. The peroration is an awful example of rash predication. After taking great pains to establish that knowledge is not power, the Parson goes on to ascribe St. Paul's self-devoted activity to the possession of it, compliments it as a "grand presence" and an "indomitable energy," and ends by calling it the following great variety of things and influences:

"Behold, my son! does not Heaven here seem to reveal the true type of Knowledge,—a sleepless activity, a pervading agency, a dauntless heroism, an all-supporting faith?—a power—a power indeed,—a power apart from the aggrandisement of self,—a power that brings to him who owns and transmits it but 'weariness and painfulness; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness,'—but a power distinct from the mere circumstance of the man, rushing from him as rays from the sun; borne through the air, and clothing it with light,—piercing under earth, and calling forth the harvest? Worship not knowledge,—worship not the sun, O my child! Let the sun but proclaim the Creator; let the knowledge but illumine the worship!"

It can scarcely be necessary to observe that, though knowledge may without any great strain be said to be power, as furnishing the amplest machinery for power to use, the one sense in which it is not power is in that of being an "energy."

There is a mass of assertion in Bulwer's writings which it is impossible to controvert because it is impossible to assign it a definite signification; and it is not worth any human being's while to elicit the various meanings which may be hypothetically assigned to it, and to ascertain if any one of them be true. Sometimes he is good enough himself to assign a plain meaning we should have had difficulty in eliciting for ourselves, as in the following fine writing, where, as usual, he is connecting things which have no true interdependence; for it is something apart from genius which makes it either modest or utilitarian:

"Genius, that, manly, robust, healthful as it be, is long before it lose its instinctive Dorian modesty; shamefaced, because so susceptible to glory—genius, that loves indeed to dream, but on the violet-bank, not the dunghill. Wherefore, even in the error of the senses, it seeks to escape from the sensual into worlds of fancy, subtle and refined. But apart from the passions, true genius is the most practical of all

Digitized by Google

human gifts. Like the Apollo whom the Greek worshiped as its type, even Arcady is its exile, not its home. Soon weary of the dalliance of Tempé, it ascends to its mission—the Archer of the silver bow, the guide of the car of light. Speaking more plainly, genius is the enthusiasm for self-improvement; it ceases or sleeps the moment it desist from seeking some object which it believes of value, and by that object it insensibly connects its self-improvement with the positive advance of the world."

It is characteristic of the philosophic observations with which Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton adorns his works, that the more you examine them, the less they yield you. To skim over his novels is a pleasant recreation; to read them with attention and a serious effort to penetrate to that deeper meaning which he insists is there, is one of the most wearisome and profitless labours man can engage in. The thoughts of a great poet are like the stars in heaven. At the first glance they seem but shining adornments of the sky; but the more you penetrate their secrets, the vaster grow their proportions, and the deeper the significance of their being. The lucubrations of Bulwer may be compared to the illuminations of Vauxhall. They seem bright as the stars at a little distance; but go nearer and nearer, and they prove to be a modicum of rag and oil in a coloured glass. They shine but to ornament the place in which they are hung, and light up only blind alleys and circumscribed commonplace pathways. Read the concluding sentences of *Ernest Maltravers:*

"Here ends the First Portion of this work: it ends in the view that bounds us when we look on the practical world with the outward unspiritual eye—and see life that dissatisfies justice,—for life is so seen but in fragments. The influence of fate seems so small on the man who, in erring, but errs as the egoist, and shapes out of ill some use that can profit himself. But Fate hangs a shadow so vast on the heart that errs but in venturing abroad, and knows only in others the sources of sorrow and joy.

Go alone, O Maltravers, unfriended, remote—thy present a waste, and thy past life a ruin, go forth to the future!—Go, Ferrers, light cynic—with the crowd take thy way,—complacent, elated,—no cloud upon conscience, for thou seest but sunshine on fortune.—Go forth to the Future!

Human life is compared to the circle—Is the simile just? All lines that are drawn from the centre to touch the circumference, by the law of the circle, are equal. But the lines that are drawn from the heart of the man to the verge of his destiny—do they equal each other?—Alas! some seem so brief, and some lengthen on as for ever."

This seems to have, and indeed has, a sort of meaning. But try to get closer to it, sift the bearings of the language, construe it

Digitized by Google

closely, assume that the author had an exact meaning, endeavour to ascertain what it is he intends to convey by every combination of words and by each word itself,—we do not say the result will be the conviction that no thought is here embodied, but certainly that blurred and incompletely explored ideas are covered up in loose phraseology and indistinct metaphor. Bulwer is eloquent, but of that school of eloquence which values ideas as a thread on which to string glittering images and gaudy words. He is one of those many writers who are to the poet what the rhetorician is to the orator, who study the tool more than the material in which they work. He rarely speaks *out* from himself, but always *to* an audience; and you constantly cannot help feeling that he labours more to show himself than his subject to advantage. He is fond of fine language for its own sake; his style is not polished, but French-varnished; does not give the highest effect to the sense which lies under it, but conceals it beneath an opaque glitter. Words, indeed, have a value and a power of their own; they are more than the representatives of things, they are themselves things; and the deepest mastery of expressional power in the poet is shown in bending their attributes as well as their meaning to his purpose. But still, of course their only proper value to the writer is as a medium of expression. There is a hollowness as well as a feebleness in employing them for ornamentation; there is singleness of purpose as well as refinement of taste and accuracy of mind in using them simply as they most exactly express our meaning. Fine writing is one of the most prominent defects in Sir Bulwer Lytton's writings; where one word would express his idea most exactly, he uses another because it is more uncommon, more pretentious, more good-looking. He will not condescend to call things by their proper names; and his euphuisms must excite many a smile among his readers. When a man has dined we are told, "the inmate of the apartment had passed the hour of the principal repast;" a canary-bird's cage is "the slender prison of one of those golden wanderers of the Canary isles which bear to our colder land some of the gentlest music of their skies and zephyrs;" men wear dressing-robes instead of gowns, walk out with staffs instead of sticks, &c. &c. Sometimes a little of Sir Edward's hard-worked scholarship is used to add to the effect: we are told of a beech-tree "shaming the pavilion of Tityrus;" a man with ancestors is called a "eupatrid;" and news are brought by a messenger, or ἄγγελος. Platitudes dressed out in a pretentious array of words are a provoking substitute for thought. A novel is not required to be full of original reflections—they are constantly very much in the way there; but we have a claim, at

Digitized by Google

any rate, to be spared the tawdry imitation of them. You are not bound to give your friends claret; but it is degrading to you and them to insist on their drinking 24*s.* St. Julien out of a large cut-glass decanter. Why are we to be informed that "he who is ambitious of things afar and uncertain passes at once into the poet-land of imagination; to aspire and to imagine are yearnings twin-born"? One knows not whether to admire most the incorrectness or the triteness of this very fine observation. Assuming it to have a meaning, it is that the objects of our ambition or aspiration are conceived by our imagination. But it is not true that the man ambitious of things afar passes into the world of imagination; he remains in the world of fact, and uses imagination to minister to practical ends; and to imagine is not a yearning at all, nor is it twin-born with to aspire, for we must first imagine that to which we aspire. And if it be meant, as the context would lead one to suppose, that political ambition stimulates the poetic imagination, this is not true, nor is it so expressed. What an ingenuous and modest air of fresh discovery about our author's statement that "there is something in severe illness, especially if it be in violent contrast to the usual strength of the body, which has often the most salutary effect on the mind"! In another place he tells us by the aid of those Capital Letters with which he makes fine words finer still, "how much of aid and solace the Herd of Men derive from the Everlasting Genius of the Few." That men of genius are few, and the source of aid and solace to many, is true or trite enough; but it is not in respect of their fewness that they minister to the world; nor is it the "Herd," but those above the "Herd," that genius most helps to sustain. But it matters little for the exact meaning; who can care for the wine with such large ornamental knobs on the decanter? It is not very often, indeed, that Sir Bulwer Lytton says things absolutely without a meaning; but that a man who cannot claim the privilege of stupidity should ever do so is sufficient to convict him of a failing in the conscientious expression of thought; and the proof that a writer is not saying something, but making up a saying, is generally to be found in the false application of single words rather than in the faulty turn of sentences. The plainest man can express his own meaning in language; but it requires a very great amount of ability to use words like mosaic, and put them together so as at once to have a brilliant effect and embody an idea. It is perhaps from the want of a habit of simply applying language to its legitimate purposes that Bulwer so often writes bad English. Sometimes, however, he not only uses words laxly, without sufficient regard to their real meaning, but makes mistakes which the

Digitized by Google

instincts if not the grammatical information of a man of education should teach him to avoid. He often falls into a vulgar error in the use of the English subjunctive. He says, "If the crime *were* committed by Eugene Aram," meaning if it *was;* for the fact is fixed in the past. He says of himself and the author of the tragedy of *Rienzi*, "Considering that our hero *be* the same," meaning considering that he *is* so; "when this *be* done," meaning when this *is* done, &c. Sometimes his phrases bear a sense exactly the reverse of what he intends. He says, "Leonard was too pleased to obey," meaning he was only too pleased, that he was pleased and did obey. He tells us, "Not an operative there but spared his mite," meaning that spared, or but spared the beggar. He speaks of the terror in a man's voice, meaning its power to inspire fear. Such things are trifles in themselves, but they test preciseness of thought and expression.

The want of accuracy, which is so obvious in Bulwer's writings in the province of thought, affects also his imagination. As a simple desire to ascertain truth is all-important to philosophy, so the power to perceive and represent things truly is the first requirement in the poet. Truthfulness of detail is of the essence of poetry. Not that detail itself is essential. A great regard to minutiæ in an artist is often justly spoken of with contempt. It is so when a man occupies himself in elaborating details of the matter he has in hand which are not of its essence, or immediately pertinent to the matter in hand; but where a detail creates a true distinction, the minuter it is the more genius displays itself in truly apprehending it and fully using it. Moreover, accuracy is most easily measured in details; and he who, whether in painting or poetry, is found incapable of dealing truthfully with minutiæ, may justly be suspected of unfaithfulness to nature in his larger designs, which are themselves less open to criticism. An imaginative writer is not bound to know every thing, but he is bound to be right in what he professes to know. Bulwer is not bound to be acquainted with the aspects of nature, or the seasons of flowering plants; he might without disgrace admit himself ignorant of the habits of animals; his observation has taken another and a higher turn: but he has no right to affect a knowledge he does not possess, and make the ludicrous mistakes he does on these subjects. In the preface to *Eugene Aram* he even calls attention to the skill by which he has indicated the progress of the story by his descriptions of the seasons, and invites us in June to the grassy banks of a stream where grow the ivy-leaved bell-flower (whatever that may be), and where on the contiguous hedge are to be seen the luxuriant flowers of

Digitized by Google

the white bryony. The poppy adorns the hedge in the last days of autumn, and the sunflower and crocus are in full glory at one time. Toads have red eyes, which you can see shining in the grass as you walk; owls flap heavily through the air, and little boys invest in large double geraniums. In *Harold* we are introduced to half a dozen handmaids "spinning," of which operation the author entertains the most confused ideas: the eye of the mistress "fell upon the row of silent maids, each at her rapid, noiseless, stealthy work. 'Ho!' said she, her cold and haughty eye gleaming as she spoke, 'yesterday they brought home the summer, to-day ye aid to bring home the winter. Weave well, heed well warf and woof; Skulda is amongst ye, and her pale fingers guide the web.'" From this, though with but vague impressions as to how Skulda was employing herself, one would think the maids were weaving, not spinning; but directly after we learn that their "spindles revolved."

But far deeper than to such trifles pierce the deficiencies of the author's imagination. They are felt throughout his writings. He is at once brilliant and indistinct. He has in its most exaggerated form what is one of the common attributes of second-class genius,—the power to see things vividly and yet not truly. He can neither grasp nor represent any thing in the fullness of its individuality. He abides in salient distinctions, and conceives that a bright light thrown on these will compensate for the finer lines of demarcation being left in darkness. His characters stand boldly out; they excite attention and interest, but they will not bear close examination; if you press too near them, they elude you, all the subtler traits lose distinctness, and you find that what they have of reality is commonplace. They are almost invariably self-consistent, to a certain extent, and individual; but they have the air of manufactures, and are all made out of the same sort of wood. You see that the author does not conceive a character; he makes it up, just as he makes up a story. He never, except in certain limited directions, penetrates into the recesses of another mind or heart. He never paints the complex reality. He has none of the poetic power of flashing a light upon the mysteries of human hidden life, the life within the man's own breast. His way of representing a man is to elaborate one or two obvious aspects of character. On these he dwells, and draws them over and over again in every new phase of circumstance in which his subject is represented, accompanying it generally with a repetition of the personal description; and, stroke after stroke, he hammers into you what such a person resembles, and what the description stands for; but, like the moon, his figures always present one side to you, and he seems to think that to paint a part

Digitized by Google

twice is as good as to paint the whole once. These defects are not so obvious as one reads. The skilful arrangement, the lively movement, the fulness and vigour of action, the spirit and point of the conversation,—these and other great merits in the novelist carry you easily and pleasantly to the end. It is only when you lay the book down that you become conscious that you have been living in an unreal and artificial world. It is like coming out of a papier-mâché manufactory: what fine things you have seen! how ingenious! how glossy! how ornate! but, after all, one does not care about papier-mâché, however brilliant; one does not remember even the best patterns as one does a good picture. Those are not real men and women one has been amongst for these three volumes; they are only admirable imitations of men and women, with "Sir Bulwer Lytton *hoc fecit*" written all over them. The author is "too much with us." There is an egotism in the genius of Bulwer that always makes itself felt; it is not so much that in his works he thrusts himself *in propriâ personâ* upon you, it is that he never leaves you; he makes his presence uncomfortably felt in every page; you see the showman at every turn moving his puppets and giving voice to their dialogues. Partly it is that he *cannot* escape from himself, that he cannot by force of imagination become another. Hence his personal creations are never themselves in all they say and do. He describes them admirably, he retains their general features, they are separate enough in all their marked outlines; but he has not that mastery of them—that possession by them, we should rather say—which enables a dramatic writer insensibly to colour with individual hues every word which comes out of the mouths of the beings with which his imagination is occupied.

Thus it is that, in spite of his great variety of outlines, a monotonous tone runs through all Bulwer's characters as soon as they begin to speak for themselves. The style, the rhythm, the position from which things are looked at,—all have a common element. The Bulwerian cast of thought and phraseology break out on them all like a rash, often to their great disfigurement. There is a sameness both in the innermost germ of his characters, and in the farthest details by which they are expressed; and this is to be expected, for a man expresses himself most individually, and throws most light on his character, by his minutest and most habitual words and actions. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's characters resemble one another in expression because they are based on a common foundation. The author's power, great and various as it is, cannot pass beyond the art of collecting certain attributes of character, and calling them a person; and he always makes such person speak

Digitized by Google

as he himself would speak had he those qualities. We have Sir Edward as man of fashion, Sir Edward as statesman, Sir Edward as highwayman, as philosopher, as squire, as young lady, as old lady, as mendicant, philanthropist, preacher, soldier, Christian, ruffian, poisoner, poet. Amazing is the fertility of mind and fancy; wonderful the command of varied incident, of the forms and modes of various kinds of life; he is a very Proteus in the art of external self-transformation; but his works, taken together, show that in all his books a set of characters are again and again reproduced, always with certain defined differences. His variety is great, but his range is small. Even Harley l'Estrange, the most original, the most essentially distinct in conception, of all his pictures, betrays his common origin as soon as he begins to be developed beyond a sketch and to occupy some space upon the stage. Godolphin is the most thoroughly executed of his characters; perhaps because he is drawn more directly from some obvious phase of the author's character. Nobody thinks Hazeldean a real English squire; you say it is like, but Sir Bulwer Lytton in top-boots and a cut-away green coat does not really deceive you for a moment. He has got himself up capitally as a country parson in Dale, and it is only when he begins to talk that we recognise the old familiar face. Riccabocca is so good that he is almost an exception to the rule; but in Leonard the colours are only well washed out and the hair brushed straight down; all the rest are old friends with a difference. Waif, in the last novel, is well conceived and well described; but he, like all the rest, can only speak himself in certain obvious characteristics. There is a complete absence in Bulwer of the fundamental, the essential part of dramatic genius. He is clever in the use of dramatic forms, and skilful in employing them as the vehicle of his narrative, and in the exposition of his characters, as far as he does expound them; but there is a limit he never passes. He has none of that wonderful faculty by which special individuality and the minutest traits and subtlest distinctions of character are betrayed, as in living men they are betrayed, by distinctions of expression and language too fine to be analysed. If he had possessed this power, he might have been a great dramatic writer; for he has all the other qualities which go to ensure success in that the most difficult field of imaginative literature, and he has shown himself a very clever and successful playwright. But read his plays (we have read them), and it is a matter of surprise that he should have condescended to write them, so insipid are the characters, so flatulent the eloquence, so conventional and so maudlin the pathos. The wit is the best; but less good in his

Digitized by Google

plays than his novels. In the language of immediate action, however, Bulwer excels. In what men do, and in that part of their language which accompanies and may be said to be part of their actions, he delineates them characteristically and well; and no one will question that, both in his conceptions and in his execution, he masters those more obvious traits which are developed in a man's outward conduct. He succeeds best, therefore, when he delineates men of action, and especially of intrigue. Vargrave may be a less probable conception than Maltravers, but he is drawn with a sharp clear stroke, while the lines in the latter are patched and wavering. It may be said this is incidental to the difference of character; but this is to confound the author with his subject. Hamlet may be irresolute, but there is no uncertainty in the lines with which Hamlet is drawn.

Sir Bulwer Lytton claims to have made a new discovery in the art of writing historical romances. Like the bold palæontologists of our day, he professes to cover the true skeleton of the past with the full form it once bore in the present; to take the facts and the outlines of characters as we find them, and to fill up the details from the resources of his imagination: he thinks you thus gain much in accuracy over those writers who distort facts more or less to suit the exigencies of their art. We doubt this. So far as historical romances go to form the historical ideas of readers, they do so by the general impressions the whole story conveys, and not by the reader's attention to the thread of historic incident on which they are strung. To pursue the simile we have just used, the unenlightened spectator who gazes on a reconstructed ichthyosaurus carries away the idea of a strangely-shaped and disagreeable-looking beast; he does not examine whether it has got its own thighbone, or whether the tail is rightly jointed; it is the general aspect which stamps itself on his mind; and if you have all the bones right and dress them up wrong, you cannot fail to produce a false impression. And who shall be so bold as to say it is within the resources of his knowledge or imagination truly to fill up the skeleton outlines of history? It is better surely that the province of the historian and the poet should be kept apart. They must of course overlap one another to a certain extent. The historian finds it necessary to give life to his pictures by completing them to some extent from the resources of his own mind; and the poet seeks food for his imagination in the truths of life. The James II. and the William III. of Macaulay are, we know, not exactly the men themselves, but the image of them the author has formed to himself; and the Achilles of Homer and the Tiberius of Jonson are raised

Digitized by Google

upon a basis of actual fact. But great poets have used history as furnishing materials to the imagination; they have not pretended that imagination can fill up according to its very reality the outline of facts. They have called what they write poems, not histories. More than a certain amount of detail and a certain amount of truth of past facts are absolutely incapable of being combined by any genius less than omniscient. Bulwer demands from us that we should look on *Harold*, *Rienzi*, and the *Last of the Barons*, not so much as efforts of the fancy as representations of reality. It is true he has great resources for works of this kind. No man handles facts with greater mastery, and good judges have pronounced him accurate in his narratives, as he certainly is painstaking in his investigations. But the deficiencies of poetic insight of which we have been speaking render him perhaps one of the last men of equal intellectual power who should undertake to reproduce the full body of past life, and to bring before us the images of men, not only as they seemed and acted, but as they were in their own hearts and consciences. He gives a vivid picture of social conditions, of manners, of events; so far as external resources are available, he commands attention and even admiration: but when thrown on himself, the limitation and egotism of his genius become painfully apparent, and more so in these historical romances than in those in which he has irresponsible power over the personages of his own creation. It is easier to judge of a false interpretation than of a faulty conception. We reconcile ourselves as we best may to the lucubrations of Devereux and Maltravers; but we feel indignant when Harold is set before us staggering under the heaped verbiage and tawdry philosophy of Sir E. B. Lytton. All veil of illusion is torn away for ever when Richard Duke of Gloucester mutters, "So perishes the race of iron. Low lies the last baron who could control the throne and command the people. The age of force expires with knighthood and deeds of arms. And over this dead great man I see the new cycle dawn." Or when Rienzi, disgusted with the Romans, cries, "And with such tools the living race of Europe and misjudging posterity will deem that the workman is to shape out the ideal and the perfect." In history more than elsewhere we are annoyed by the struggle between egotism and dramatic power, and smile to see how at every turn the minds of other times and other lands are used as the mouthpieces of the author's favourite ideas and forms of speech. In life his Saxons, his Italians, his Greeks and Egyptians once talked for purposes of their own; it is now their province to talk so as to show how poetically and profoundly Sir E. B. Lytton can write. "Does the

Digitized by Google

ground," says a Saxon in the eleventh century, who is represented as worldly-wise above his fellows,—"does the ground reject the germs of the sower" (he means the seed he sows, not his own embryon; but germ is more poetical than seeds, and would be preferred by a worldly-wise Saxon),

"or the young heart the first lessons of wonder and awe? Since then, Prophetess, Night hath been my comrade, and Death my familiar. Rememberest thou again the hour when, stealing, a boy, from Harold's house in his absence—the night ere I left my land—I stood on this mound by thy side? Then did I tell thee that the sole soft thought that relieved the bitterness of my soul, when all the rest of my kinsfolk seemed to behold in me but the heir of Sweyn, the outlaw and homicide, was the love that I bore to Harold; but that that love itself was mournful and bodeful as the hwata* of distant sorrow. And thou didst take me, O Prophetess, to thy bosom, and thy cold kiss touched my lips and my brow; and there, beside this altar and grave-mound, by leaf and by water, by staff and by song, thou didst bid me take comfort; for that as the mouse gnawed the toils of the lion, so the exile obscure should deliver from peril the pride and the prince of my House—that from that hour with the skein of his fate should mine be entwined; and his fate was that of kings and of kingdoms. And then, when the joy flushed my cheek, and methought youth came back in warmth to the night of my soul—then, Hilda, I asked thee if my life would be spared till I had redeemed the name of my father. Thy seid-staff passed over the leaves that, burning with fire-sparks, symbolled the life of the man, and from the third leaf the flame leaped up and died; and again a voice from thy breast, hollow, as if borne from a hill-top afar, made answer, 'At thine entrance to manhood life bursts into blaze, and shrivels up into ashes.' So I knew that the doom of the infant still weighed unannealed on the years of the man; and I come here to my native land as to glory and the grave. But," said the young man, with a wild enthusiasm, "still with mine links the fate which is loftiest in England; and the rill and the river shall rush in one to the Terrible Sea."

Listen how Harold and Haco converse in an afternoon's ride. "Ride with me, then," says Harold; "but pardon a dull companion; for when the soul communes with itself, the lip is silent." "True," said Haco; "and I am no babbler. Three things are ever silent,—thought, destiny, and the grave." This system of lugging in a pseudo-poetico-philosophical observation in the train of the simplest observations is not uncommon in Bulwer, but he is an exceptional human being in this mode of expressing his thoughts. There is no age or country in which men have habitually heightened their discourse with this sort of seasoning. Even in the author's own day, we don't hear people say, "Good morning, for ere the fast is broken saluta-

* Omen.

Digitized by Google

tion is sweet;" or, "No more, thank you, I'm no great eater. Three things have no appetite,—moral reflections, chance, and the resurrection of the dead."

When you read *Quentin Durward*, or *Old Mortality*, or *Woodstock*, you don't ask yourself, Is this history? but you are in some danger of quietly taking a false impression. So easy, so natural, so life-like is the presentation, that you can scarcely escape its charm. Sir Walter Scott may lead your impressions astray, Sir Bulwer Lytton prevents their being true; but he does not leave any permanently false ideas, his figures are so obviously unreal that they do not long dwell in the memory or the imagination. They are human hypotheses you accept for the sake of the story, and discard when you have finished it. If there be an exception to this, it is in the case of *Rienzi*, incomparably the best of Bulwer's historical romances. The characters both of Rienzi and Montreal are those with which he is best fitted to deal; but those who recall their impressions of this novel will find they have gathered no image of the real man Rienzi. Description wanders round and round him, but never settles on him. The events among which he moved, these are clearly and vividly stamped: ambition and love find a voice powerful, though often exaggerated in tone and meretricious in colouring; the subordinate persons are sketched-in with an effective and experienced touch. But ask yourself, Has the writer ever penetrated to the real nature of his hero, or is it indeed the complete image of any real man with which he presents you? and you are forced to confess it is not; but only a clever conglomeration of attributes, having all the life-likeness that can be obtained from the display of qualities in appropriate action, but not that higher one which great imaginations alone possess the power to set forth, because they alone have the power to pierce to the nature upon which it is framed. Bulwer does not divine a character, he excogitates it.

Nor in these historical romances is his singleness of purpose more to be trusted than his genius. It is plain that he is treating his historic personages as material; that he is not even seeking to represent them as they most truly were, but that this aim is subordinate to another, that of making them effective. They are for him such stuff as three-volume novels destined to be popular are made of, and their little life is rounded off into the Bulwerian philosophy.

In the dedicatory epistle to *The Last of the Barons*, after a brief enumeration of his *dramatis personæ*, we are told, "Such characters as I have here alluded to seemed then to me, in meditating the treatment of the high and brilliant subject which your eloquence animated me to attempt, the proper

Digitized by Google

Representative of the multiform Truths which the time of Warwick the King-maker affords to our interests and suggests for our instruction." It never does to inquire too closely into the exact meaning of all Sir E. B. Lytton writes; but without troubling ourselves too long about what is intended by a time affording multiform truths to our interests, we may gather from the whole sentence that it is the author's desire to make the delineation of persons subordinate to his own ideas of the truths embodied in or suggested by the history of the time. Such a confession at once destroys confidence in his historical trustworthiness. You may if you choose, poor work as it is, create men to represent ideas; but no writer is to be trusted in using the persons of history as the "representatives of truths." They will require much docking and fining and altering before they will fit into our philosophy; and almost unconsciously the operator moulds them from what they really were into what they ought to have been to suit his purpose. The fact is, Sir Bulwer Lytton's ambition urges him to an impossible task. He cannot bear that his historical romances should fail to unite the most diverse claims upon our admiration. They are to be true history, exciting romance, and profound philosophy. Nor are these difficult subjects of combination arranged in that defined order of subordination which alone could make their coexistence tolerable. Each struggles for predominance, and each in turn is permitted to possess it; so that every work is in different parts one of these three things at the expense of the other two. *Harold* is, more than any other of his works, marked with this vacillation of purpose; it extends to the very style, with its petty pedantries and the sharp contrasts between an occasional imitation of the style of the old chroniclers and the inflated Latin periods more natural to the author.

There are other works, however, of Sir E. B. Lytton, in which the philosophical element, if we may so call it, occupies a more prominent place. He is fond, indeed, of assigning to all his works some definite central idea or moral lesson, of which the story itself is the development. These appear to more advantage when we are told about them in the prefaces than when we attempt to discover them in the works themselves. It taxes our credulity to be told that *Paul Clifford* is a disquisition on the philosophy of punishment; that *Godolphin* traces the deterioration of character by a career of self-indulgence; or that *Ernest Maltravers* and *Alice* develop the education of circumstances and the career of genius. That the author has had some such aims, we do not dispute; but his mind is too little capable of connected and permanent moral convictions

Digitized by Google

to fit him to use his genius for invention as the machinery for developing and expressing moral ideas. His readers must always regret that the free play of powers more natural to him is impaired by the constant strain to make them ancillary to ideas with which, after all, the limits of the author's nature make it impossible for him adequately to deal. Had Sir Bulwer Lytton confined his aspirations to the entertainment of his fellow-creatures by vivid pictures of social life, display of character, and narrative of events and actions, he would have taken far higher rank as a novelist, and would have lost nothing by resigning all claim to the character of a profound moral instructor and the expounder of valuable truths. We are aware that the author does not agree with us. We have read with attention in his prefaces the assertions that the intellectual mould in which many of his fictions are cast raises them above the comprehension of most readers, and that not to admire is simply not to understand. Stimulated by the boldness of his claims, we have read his works with attention; and we cannot conceal our conviction that the disappointment in this direction of all readers will be proportioned to the closeness and patience with which they scrutinise the real matter those works contain, and that their popularity is always likely to remain greatest with those who are satisfied to regard them as exciting tales of life and passion.

The author, though deeply impressed with the necessity of being a moral writer, always seems desirous of attaining his end at as little expenditure of connected thought as possible. His fondness for what he oddly calls types seems to spring from this source. He is fond of telling you that certain characters and certain lives are "the types" of certain abstract moral qualities, and he seems to think that to say this is to enforce a moral conclusion. The disappointment of the reader is great when he finds, on taking the pains to examine, that all that is meant is, that the moral quality in question forms a part of the character, and is to a certain extent brought into action in the life; but that there is no sense in which that special quality rather than half a dozen others is exemplified in that life and character. Thus in *Harold* we read that "if the leading agencies of Harold's memorable career might be as it were symbolised and allegorised by the living beings with which it was connected, as Edith was the representative of stainless Truth, as Gurth was the type of dauntless Duty" (imagine a courageous obligation!), "as Hilda embodied aspiring Imagination, so Haco seemed the personation of worldly wisdom." What a strange purposelessness there seems in culling out these qualities, calling them "the agencies" of one man's

Digitized by Google

career, and allegorising them in three other persons, to each of which any reader of the book will be at no loss to ascribe half a dozen equally distinctive traits! In reality, Bulwer's imagination, whatever its other defects, is too broad and active for this narrow identification of human beings with single attributes.

A great regard for types is always evidence of some shallowness of mind. Those who are deeply impressed with the richness and infinite variety of created things, who are sensible to the fine links which unite, the subtle and melting distinctions which separate, who feel into what an intermingling and delicate web of existence the lives of men are interwoven,—such men are shy of "types." To invent an allegory is a very different thing from discovering or developing a type. If a type is to be true, it must embody in a single individual form the universal and essential characteristics of that of which it is the type; and it must remain true to these in all the aspects in which it is displayed. You cannot make so complex a thing as a human being the type of an abstract quality without either representing the man partially or the quality confusedly. You may invent a sort of incarnation of a quality. Hebe, with ever-blooming charms, may be made the type of youth. You may take a living thing, an animal, or even a man, and show it in some special aspect as the type of a quality; you may say a lion is the type of generosity, a Bacon the type of the investigative mind: but you can't write the true natural history of the lion, or the true biography of Bacon, and at the same time make these descriptions mere amplifications of the typical character assigned to the subjects of them. The attempt to do so must necessarily lead to falseness and incompleteness. You cannot really combine allegory and exhibition of character. It is always a source of discomfort to the reader when an author attempts to do so. We are always much happier when he allows things to be what they are. What a plague it would be if Sir Walter Scott were infected with a *penchant* for types! if he were always telling us, for instance, that the old knight in *Woodstock* was the type of loyalty, and informed us in a preface that because he had told us so *Woodstock* was an intellectual romance! In reality, the inventions of Bulwer are too real and life-like to serve as mere embodiments of ideas or vehicles of "moral suggestions." When once warmed to the human interests of his personages, he soon overwhelms their assigned typical character. But he is very unwilling to allow this; he clings to his inner meanings; he cannot forego the credit of being profound as well as exciting and entertaining; and the resources he turns to when, by adherence to the exi-

Digitized by Google

gencies of his story and characters, he has involved his types in inextricable confusion, has in it something not easily reconcilable with candour and good sense. He throws the burden on the reader; he hints that what seems nonsense is only the depth of hidden wisdom. He won't quite commit himself to saying he himself has a meaning in it all; but he says to his readers, You must all set to work and look for a meaning: I dare say you will all find different ones; but that you must expect, for the meaning is "a mystery." Now, even if we were sure our author had a concealed meaning, we should scarcely trouble ourselves to seek it carefully through a work of fiction unless we had some guarantee in his other writings that the meaning when found would repay us for the search. Many men may think it worth their while to solve the enigma of Goethe's *Helena;* but we cannot help smiling when Sir Edward, with his somewhat arrogant and yet uneasy egotism, invites us to a similar task. Certainly those who are most familiar with the sort of thought his writings in general display will be the least anxious to lend their efforts to the solution of such a work as *Zanoni*. We are far from having a low estimate of the intellectual powers of the author of *Ernest Maltravers* and *My Novel:* his observations both on social and political life are acute, his generalisations from historical and political experience sensible, and sometimes far-sighted; his direct moral conclusions are just, his knowledge in the different directions his branch of art demands is up to the mark, though it sometimes bears the traces of having been made up for the occasion: but active, vigorous, and well-in-hand as his mind is, it is commonplace in the direction of thought; and wherever, as is too often the case, he labours to be profound, he will be found either dealing with elaborately-decorated platitudes, or a hopeless confusion of idea concealed in pretentious verbiage. There is little temptation, then, to attack the "mysteries" of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's concoction; it is not pleasant to spend time in exploring a perplexed road which leads to nowhere in particular.

We will quote entire the author's note on *Zanoni*, because it is eminently characteristic of the value which he appears to attach to what he calls the "typical" side of art, and is itself not free from a confusion of thought and obscurity of expression which tends much to destroy the faith it is intended to stimulate.

"The curiosity which *Zanoni* has excited among those who think it worth while to dive into the subtler meanings they believe it intended to convey, may excuse me in adding a few words, not in explanation of its mysteries, but upon the principles which permit them.

Digitized by Google

Zanoni is not, as some have supposed, an allegory; but beneath the narrative it relates, *typical* meanings are concealed. It is to be regarded in two characters, distinct yet harmonious—1st, that of the simple and objective fiction, in which (once granting the license of the author to select a subject which is, or appears to be, preternatural) the reader judges the writer by the usual canons—viz. by the consistency of his characters under such admitted circumstances, the interest of his story, and the coherence of his plot;—of the work regarded in this view, it is not my intention to say any thing, whether in exposition of the design, or in defence of the execution. No typical meanings (which, in plain terms, are but moral suggestions, more or less numerous, more or less subtle) can afford just excuse to a writer of fiction for the errors he should avoid in the most ordinary novel. We have no right to expect the most ingenious reader to search for the inner meaning, if the obvious course of the narrative be tedious and displeasing. It is, on the contrary, in proportion as we are satisfied with the objective sense of a work of imagination, that we are inclined to search into its depths for the more secret intentions of the author. Were we not so divinely charmed with *Faust*, and *Hamlet*, and *Prometheus*,—so ardently carried on by the interest of the story told to the common understanding, we should trouble ourselves little with the types in each which all of us can detect—none of us can elucidate;—none elucidate, for the essence of type is mystery. We behold the figure, we cannot lift the veil. The Author himself is not called upon to explain what he designed. An Allegory is a personation of distinct and definite things—Virtues or Qualities—and the Key can be given easily; but a writer who conveys typical meanings may express them in myriads. He cannot disentangle all the hues which commingle into the light he seeks to cast upon truth; and therefore the great masters of this enchanted soil—Fairy land of Fairy land—Poetry embedded beneath Poetry—wisely leave to each mind to guess at such truths as best please or instruct it. To have asked Goethe to explain the *Faust* would have entailed as complex and puzzling an answer as to have asked Mephistopheles to explain what is beneath the earth we tread on. The stores beneath may differ for every passenger; each step may require a new description; and what is treasure to the geologist may be rubbish to the miner. Six worlds may lie under a sod, but to the common eye they are but six layers of stone.

Art in itself, if not necessarily typical, is essentially a suggester of something subtler than that which it embodies to the sense. What Pliny tells us of a great painter of old, is true of most great painters; 'their works express something beyond the works'—'more felt than understood.' This belongs to the concentration of intellect which high Art demands, and which of all the Arts, Sculpture best illustrates. Take Thorwaldsen's Statue of Mercury—it is but a single figure, yet it tells to those conversant with Mythology a whole legend. The god has removed the pipe from his lips, because he has lulled already the Argus, whom you do not see, to sleep. He is pressing his heel against his sword, because the moment is come when he may slay his victim.

Digitized by Google

Apply the principle of this noble concentration of Art to the moral writer: he, too, gives to your eye but a single figure; yet each attitude, each expression, may refer to events and truths you must have the learning to remember, the acuteness to penetrate, or the imagination to conjecture. But to a classical judge of sculpture, would not the exquisite pleasure of discovering the all not told in Thorwaldsen's masterpiece be destroyed if the artist had engraved in detail his meaning at the base of the statue? Is it not the same with the typical sense which the artist in words conveys? The pleasure of divining Art in each is the noble exercise of all by whom Art is worthily regarded.

We of the humbler race not unreasonably shelter ourselves under the Authority of the Masters, on whom the world's judgment is pronounced; and great names are cited, not with the arrogance of equals, but with the humility of inferiors.

The author of *Zanoni* gives, then, no key to mysteries, be they trivial or important, which may be found in the secret chambers by those who lift the tapestry from the wall; but out of the many solutions of the main enigma—if enigma, indeed, there be—which have been sent to him, he ventures to select the one which he subjoins, from the ingenuity and thought which it displays, and from respect for the distinguished writer (one of the most eminent our time has produced) who deemed him worthy of an honour he is proud to display. He leaves it to the reader to agree with, or dissent from, the explanation. 'A hundred men,' says the old Platonist, 'may read the book by the help of the same lamp, yet all may differ on the text; for the lamp only lights the characters—the mind must divine the meaning.' The object of a Parable is not that of a Problem; it does not seek to convince, but to suggest. It takes the thought below the surface of the understanding to the deeper intelligence which the world rarely tasks. It is not sunlight on the water, it is a hymn chanted to the Nymph who hearkens and awakes below."

That disingenuousness of which we have spoken shows itself in the whole tenor of this note. The writer tacitly claims credit for some very subtle and profound meaning embodied in his fiction, and yet declines committing himself to having any meaning at all. It is, in fact, an appeal to the reader to make a meaning, and call it the author's.

He opens by intimating pretty clearly that *Zanoni* is designed to have an esoteric meaning. It has "*mysteries*;" it is not an allegory, but conceals "*typical* meanings." A little uncertain as to what is meant by typical meanings, we are relieved a little further on to find they "are but moral suggestions." But after some sensible observations on the necessity, at any rate, of a good story, comes a cloud of very fine writing very inapplicable to "moral suggestions." We are told that we can detect types in *Faust*, *Hamlet*, and *Prometheus*, but none of us can "elucidate" them. We ask how this is. It is hard; try it in the

Digitized by Google

vernacular. It would seem, then, that there are in *Hamlet* moral suggestions all of us can find, but none of us can bring to light. Does Sir Edward attach a meaning to this process of elucidation subsequent to discovery in the case of moral suggestions; or, admitting that moral suggestions can be exhibited veiled and incapable of examination, does he attach a value to such suggestions? And has he really a defined meaning for the word "type;" or is he trying to make one for the occasion? He excludes allegory; but does he really mean "moral suggestions"? Is Miss Edgeworth one of those persons who convey "typical meanings" in myriads? And when we are told that such a writer "cannot disentangle all the hues which commingle into the light *he seeks* to cast upon truth," is this any thing more than cuttle-fish writing, and a desire to seek safety under a cloud of printer's ink? If there be any meaning in this and what follows, it must be that an author is not bound to understand his own meaning, but throws that onus on his readers. It puts one in mind of the showman and the little boy. "And what are the truths, Sir Edward?" "Whatever you please, my gentle reader; you buy the novel, and you take your choice." Once take the reverse of Dr. Butler's dictum, and assume that every thing in a book is *not* that which it is, but any other thing you choose to make it; and there is no limit to the mysteries any work may contain. But there is no necessity to write clever books under this dispensation. *Cock Robin* and *Prince Fortunatus* are as rich in deep truths to the man who brings them with him as Shakespeare and Bacon. As for Goethe, either he had a meaning, however complex, or he had not; and if he had not, it is no use looking in *Faust* for what is not there. Sometimes, indeed, an author has a meaning which he never clearly works out in his own mind, and of course, therefore, cannot very clearly express in his work. This is no uncommon failing; but it is a great additional error to allow one's self-estimation to suggest that the obscurity arises from the profundity of one's thoughts, and to call that a mystery, a type, or even a moral suggestion, which is in reality only want of clearness of mind. Throughout this note, indeed, the writer seems to be confounding two very different sources of suggestion, which are to be found in all imaginative writers. The creations of every great poet will suggest to us many of the same truths as would have been suggested to us by the realities of which his figments are the representatives; and (the instincts of his genius producing on his pages a faithful image of the realities of the world) his work may possess a mine of wealth which he has not of set purpose placed there, and is possibly entirely unconscious of, and from which each reader may gather according

Digitized by Google

to his own powers of insight. If the poet truly portray men, you may learn from him something of men, just as you would learn it from the living. *Hamlet* may cast a new light on the workings of the human intellect in other directions than those in which the poet conceived, and we may learn things from him Shakespeare never intended; but Shakespeare can no more claim to be the philosophical discoverer and setter-forth of these truths than a painter could claim to be a botanist because he added to botanical knowledge by the correct drawing of a new plant. On the other hand, the poet undoubtedly may expressly embody certain truths, and make his inventions the vehicle of moral suggestions; but however subtle and profound these may be, there is no "mystery" about them, nor can he make these suggestions without understanding what he is doing. There is nothing mysterious in the meaning attached to the figure by Thorwaldsen, chosen by Bulwer as an illustration. The sculptor knew very well what he meant to indicate. It is there for those who have the skill to detect it, and is simple and comprehensible enough. And so it should be. If a work of art be meant as a typical embodiment of certain ideas, every pains should be taken to make its meaning transparent and its purpose clear; and few things can degrade art more than to make it a cloak for a riddle. One thing, however, is worse; and that is, to make it a riddle without an answer. The story of *Zanoni* is full of the author's peculiar power; the supernatural elements are handled with great address, it would scarcely be possible in some respects to speak too highly of the conception and execution of parts of it: but the constant hints of some unspeakable depths of inner meaning; the triteness and confusion of all of that inner meaning which is graciously exposed to us; the absence of any indications that there really is any clear connected explanation; and the affectation of solemnity and reserve in this note, the "I could an if I would, and yet I know not" air,—give one the feeling that *Zanoni*, with its vast blowing of esoteric trumpets and constant invitations to step inside and see the real meaning of the show, is in reality a sham; and that the "mystery" bears the same relation to the brilliant story, that the decayed old lion and half-dozen mangy monkeys inside a travelling menagerie bear to the lively representation of wild-beasts in every attitude which hangs outside. The truth we apprehend is, that Bulwer had a meaning, which we may call allegorical or typical; that it was never very clear, and that the exigencies of the story distorted it still more: but the language of *Zanoni* is so very fine, that he *feels*, as the women say, that it must contain some depths of meaning; he welcomes the idea that in the recesses of his eloquence his

Digitized by Google

genius may have laid eggs of gold unknown to himself, and he cackles thus loudly to the world to come and look for them. But the world must first be satisfied that the eggs are there; and secondly, that they are of gold. The success of the distinguished writer whose explanation the author prints is certainly not such as to lead many others into the same field of inquiry.

Bulwer has been accused of seeking an unwholesome source of interest in criminal life and passions. If this charge against some of his novels has been pushed further than is reasonable, it is owing in some measure to the exaggerated pretensions to purity and elevation of moral design which have been put forward by the author. He was at the pains some years ago to write a pamphlet to justify his choice of subjects in his three novels of *Paul Clifford*, *Eugene Aram*, and *Lucretia* (the only ones to which this accusation directly applies), and to defend his treatment. The subject is skilfully and forcibly, but not very thoroughly, handled. We have no space here to discuss the grounds and limitations of the dealing of art with criminal subject-matter; in part, no doubt, the same considerations which forbid us to expect too much from mere sympathy with the expressions of the higher feelings and sentiments evoked by art are those which justify its use of the lower ones. But it is difficult to go along with an author in his undiscriminating claim to treat the every-day crimes of modern life as the legitimate subjects of imaginative fiction; nor does he meet the obvious objections to thus dealing with them by saying that we are daily brought in contact with the realities. The very question is, What are the limits of art in the reproduction of realities? There are many things in life, the most repulsive and degrading, which we cannot avoid; but this is no argument for voluntarily reproducing them, and giving them that hold upon us which they derive from being seen through a vivid imagination. We willingly admit that Bulwer's genius particularly qualifies him to interpose the screen of art before his deformed subject-matter; but here, as elsewhere, the love of effect predominates over all other considerations. *Lucretia* may be said to be the only one of Bulwer's novels in which crime is made the main source of interest; and skilfully managed as it is, those who read it can scarcely escape the conviction that it is degrading to be brought into this close contact with revolting crime for the sake of the fine writing and exciting scenes of action which can be spun out of it. And though it may be true, as Bulwer urges, that art can enforce a deeper moral than a common mind can gather from realities, yet it is certain that he himself is but ill-qualified to pluck the flower out of this nettle.

Digitized by Google

He has little or no power to depict the influence of criminal indulgence on the human heart; he does not bring that knowledge, that insight, which alone can give dignity to such a theme. He believes he does, and he is therefore fairly justified to himself. You cannot blame him for writing *Lucretia*, conceiving, as he evidently does, that it is full of deep wisdom, and unravels the mysteries of men's temptations and of God's judgments. But it is not so. It is at best a mere intellectual study, and by no means a profound one. The criminal interest in the Children of Night is simply the vivid personal description and lively history of the actions of three murderers. It is ably done; it is relieved happily enough by the less revolting characters and brighter aspects of the story; but it has in it nothing of that profound insight into the sources of crime, none of that *truth*, to be brief, which alone can reconcile us to such a picture. And at the same time the author seeks to create a fictitious interest, opposed to his own and all true principles of art, by reminding us constantly that the story has a basis in actual fact. This is worst of all. If a story like this is true, we then confine ourselves to what we know. In real facts some grain of golden experience lies always hidden for those whose business it may be to search for it. But when an artist like Bulwer lays hold of it, alters it to his purpose, furbishes it up, adorns it with poetical language, rhetorical gauds, and a bright depicting fancy, and thinks he has done the cause of goodness service by the not less than savage cruelty with which he dilates on the doom which overtakes the guilty lives he pictures,—what can we really learn from a medley where the reality is inextricably mixed with false lights thrown in to make a glittering picture? If a poet can draw a guilty career and a sinful heart *truly*, he may teach us much. But this needs two things; the insight to perceive the truth, and a singleness of purpose to lay it bare. If a writer have these, he may create truth-teaching phantasms out of the resources of his imagination; if he have them not, to base his creations on a substructure of reality is but to introduce an element of additional perplexity, and to give a spur to false excitement. In *Eugene Aram*, as in *Lucretia*, a nucleus of reality is made a false source of interest. Without it the *Eugene Aram* of Bulwer would scarcely command the perusal of any one more exigeant than a school-boy. It rings hollow and artificial from beginning to end. It can scarcely be said to touch on real human life. It is a sort of pasteboard existence to which you are introduced, so hard and stiff and thin are all the figures. But it is with the morality of the story we are now occupied. No doubt the sudden descent of cultivated intellect, and an

Digitized by Google

apparently gentle and elevated nature, into foul crime is a phenomenon which startles men strangely, which lays hold on something deeper than our curiosity, and which may well challenge the keenest inquisition of both the philosopher and the poet. But the only way in which the poet can turn it to a moral purpose, is to find a moral solution of it. Assuredly in that nature there was some moral canker, which had eaten wide and deep below the surface before so sudden a collapse could have taken place. To deem otherwise is to upset the foundations of the world. To tell us that a man not only apparently but really wise, humane, conscientious, and pious, may step out any dark night with a bludgeon and murder a passer-by for the sake of his purse, is to dissolve the faith which is the fundamental cement of human society. There are but two explanations of such an event: either

> "Rank corruption, mining all within,
> Corrupts unseen;"

or insanity, in some form or other, has unhinged the nature. A true poet, dealing with such a subject, would find its deepest demands upon him in those mysteries of human self-deception which would at once explain it and derive light from it. Bulwer does, indeed, aim at something of this kind; but his treatment is shallow and artificial. He has heard of a Spanish priest who committed a somewhat similar crime, and grafts the jesuitical sophistries proper to such a nature and education on the English scholar. With the real difficulties of the intricate phenomenon before him he is utterly incapable of dealing; and the very fact of his venturing, with the resources at his command, on such a subject shows that the moral aspect of the thing has no real hold upon him, but that he is mainly anxious to get good materials for a novel out of it. What he wants is a romantic figure of a man involved in mystery, whom it shall be woe to the fair-haired sister to love, who shall attract admiration and commiseration, and whose end shall be as the end of a blue-light on the stage.

Clifford is open to the same objection of want of moral veraciousness of painting. A boy nursed among thieves and ruffians could never retain the characteristics which make Clifford's claim upon our sympathy. One would not examine these claims to moral purpose so strictly if they were not urged by the author so strongly. *Clifford*, though often silly both in its wit and its sentiment, is a good-humoured and clever enough satire, though in somewhat a small way. William Brandon is a good figure, and there is spirit and vivacity enough in the book to carry us through it. *Eugene Aram* may pass muster as

Digitized by Google

a melodrama, and *Lucretia* as an exciting story for those whose tastes are not very refined; and all may claim to be written with a decent regard for propriety, and with a desire to avoid the mischievous handling of doubtful materials. But when the author invites us to enter them as treasure-houses of wisdom, and seems, when in later life he opens the door afresh with a new preface, to fall back himself astonished at the dignity of the structure and the wealth amassed in it, no one can help expressing some little disappointment when he comes to scrutinise for himself the subject-matter of so profound and doubtless so genuine an admiration.

As a constructive artist Bulwer is indisputably great; and his works stand in this respect above those of every contemporary, we may almost say every rival. *Tom Jones* is a true work of art; still it is of simple construction. *Ernest Maltravers* and *What will he do with it?* are far more complex narratives, and in structure not less complete and harmonious. In truthfulness, in wisdom, in humour, in good taste, in all that marks higher poetic power, and in some respects a higher nature, Fielding stands immeasurably above Bulwer; but in skill of construction, in command of intricate combinations of facts, Bulwer may certainly claim to rival, if not to excel, him who is justly esteemed to stand first in the ranks of the writers of prose fiction. There is something marvellous in the grasp he has of his whole design, and the skill and ease with which he evolves all intricacies of plot, with which, without straining his characters or his incidents, he marshals all his materials and concentrates his varied forces on one result. Perhaps his only defect as a narrator is, that he sometimes indulges in a sort of new spring at the end of his story, and just when the whole should draw to its sudden solution, creates a new difficulty, which unduly protracts the finale: such is Sophy's refusal to accept Lionel, Maltravers' last contest with Alice, and perhaps,—though there, indeed, it is more of the substance of the whole story,—Philip's attachment to Caroline, in *Night and Morning*.

Joined with his constructive and narrative power, Bulwer has a great faculty for description, and a quick eye for the external life of the world. He has lived among men and seen society; he has great familiarity with the demeanour of his fellow-creatures. There are certain more obvious aspects of character with which he every where deals, and he depicts them very vividly; he can represent forcibly men as they appear in action; he can paint with vigour the working of the passions.

A certain masculine energy prevails through all his works, and is one of their best features. He may have no sympathy

Digitized by Google

with the higher motives of the will, but he cannot bear to see its powers frittered away. The ambition he loves to paint may not be the loftiest, but at least it demands self-control and energy. He has represented men engaged in the real interests of life, not confining himself to catching them in their hours of sentiment and recreation, but conveying, perhaps with more success than any other novelist, the impressions of persons really busied in the affairs of the world; in all he writes there is a full mental wakefulness; nothing sleeps, nothing dawdles. Intellectual activity is one of the prominent characteristics of the author's nature, and leaves its stamp not only in all his books, but in all the personages of his creation. His artistic and intellectual faculties give the key to all his main characteristics as a writer. He might be described as an author with a strong passion to create, and dependent on intellectual resources. Hence his fertility, and the constant occupation of new fields of activity: hence his confusion of thought, for his intellect is constantly grasping at questions in which his moral insight is insufficient to give him the necessary support and assistance; he apprehends intellectually the subjects of other men's feelings, and is for ever giving you a sort of mental substitute for realities. From the poverty of his moral and poetic nature comes the want of inner connectedness in all his various productions; they have a common intellectual likeness, but in other respects they suit themselves to the demands of his subject or the tastes of the day: the undisguised licentiousness and freedom of Pelham; the effrontery of Devereux; the softened and anxiously explained fall of Ernest Maltravers, and its French taste, and sometimes (as in the account of Alice and the Banker) approach to French indecencies; the domestic sentimentalities of the Caxtons; and the electro-plate imitation of the highest tone in his last two novels,—these things could not come out of the inner nature of the same man; they are the assumptions of his art. His moral truths are got up for the particular occasion, and serve only to carry him through a single work: often they are only made up to emboss a page, or give point to a paragraph; wrapt up in affected language, they decorate the chapter, and fill up the interstices of the narrative. The discontinuity of his moral reflections does not arise from his genius being dramatic,—it is the reverse of dramatic; it is not that the moral character of his personages varies, but the moral temper of the different works; and all the characters, however various, are steeped in the particular atmosphere which for the time prevails.

His intellectual conclusions have, as we should expect, somewhat more continuity. He has some wrong dogmas of art

Digitized by Google

in which he may almost be said to believe; but his ideas, with the exception of those which bear on an ambition to win success in the world and fame after death, are not such as concern the realities of life, and the mass of thoughts have no fixed root of inner conviction from which they spring. It would be absurd to assert that with a man of Sir Bulwer Lytton's intellectual range and large mental energy there should not be much that is true and forcibly put among his multitudinous assertions; but when he touches on any deeper theme, it is rarely indeed that his words speak with any force to us, rarely that we can escape the sense of their being artificial and hollow; and the reason of this is, that without specially analysing his feelings, every reader gathers more or less the knowledge that it is love of display, not love of truth, which dictates them, —that they serve a purpose instead of expressing a belief. From want of moral convictions, it naturally follows that he has no self-reliance; he alternately defies, and abjectly humbles himself before, the popular opinions of moral questions. Thus how glaringly he paints Maltravers' guilty pleasure, and how lightly he handles his sin! but of Alice, where there is no sin, he dares not say as much, but anxiously arrogates to himself the credit of her sufferings, and claims to have virtuously devised a retribution for her. Hence too, in great measure, his excessive sensitiveness to opinion and adverse criticism. A man who is sensible of having spoken the truth that is in him, or given a voice to his real inspirations, will have strength enough in himself to give its just weight to criticism, whether favourable or otherwise, and dignity to let that which is unjust pass him by. He will scarcely betake himself to protestations, and hold himself out in prose and verse as injured and unappreciated.

The way in which Bulwer gives us an intellectual *réchauffé* of the original thing is most curiously illustrated in his humour and his poetry. With no inconsiderable share of wit, he has but a bare spark of humour in his composition; yet how cleverly the imitation of it is got up in his later novels! The "augh baugh" and other clumsy and laboured jocularity of the corporal in *Eugene Aram* is exchanged for something much more like the real thing. Still, every reader of common penetration sees that it does not come naturally from him; that it is collected elsewhere, or painstakingly invented, and sewn on like gold-lace on a coat. A humorous man could not possibly have printed many of the things which Bulwer presents us with as humorous; he would have despised himself if they had occurred to him. But they never would have occurred to him. Their very presence indicates blindness, absence of faculty. Any

Digitized by Google

clever man may, with more or less success, imitate humorous sayings; but it is a clear proof that he is thus imitating, and has no sense of the humorous in himself, when he can mistake for humour such things as are presented to the insulted reader in the headings of some of the chapters of *What will he do with it?*

None of Bulwer's early novels deal with the affections. When he bethought himself to be humorous, and affectionately instead of passionately sentimental, he took down his Sterne. And he has availed himself well of his studies. He has not only familiarised himself with the style and manner of his master, he has been bold enough to appropriate his greatest work. And his Bowdler's edition of *Tristram Shandy* is extremely well done. Poor Uncle Toby comes off the worst; with a tight stock round his throat and a poker down his back, he sits there in rigid strait-lacedness, doing lasting penance for the too unconstrained ease of his former demeanour; condemned to be eternally sentimental, and to be denied the solace of laughter. A word as to the plagiarism. It was permissible to any one to take his suggestions for his leading characters, his hints of humour and his mode of style, from a work of such recognised fame as *Tristram Shandy;* but it has always been esteemed a part of candour to recognise obligations so great, and a perfect silence in such a case contrasts ill with the somewhat officious recognition of small and unimportant ones scattered here and there through the writings of Bulwer. It does not improve the matter that *The Caxtons* is mainly adapted to be a favourite with female readers; and that with them, happily, the sources from which it was drawn would be tolerably sure to escape detection. Throughout his works Bulwer is not very strict in availing himself of foreign resources. Even his last novel bears, in the character of Mrs. Crane, and in the style of narrative, very evident traces, not so much of his having been influenced by as of his having consulted the writings of Mr. Dickens and Mr. Charles Reed. He condescends even to adopt Sterne's little buffooneries in printing; and it was an unblushing thing to feed a second donkey after the model of the macaroon scene in *The Sentimental Journey.*

Nothing can more forcibly indicate Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's absolute deficiency in true poetical genius than the value he assigns to his own poetry. After ample time for reflection, he has deliberately placed it on record that his *King Arthur* is the highest effort of his powers, and the work on which he rests his claims to posthumous fame. This is to be most unjust to himself. No poet could have written *King Arthur.* But granting so difficult an hypothesis, it is impossible he could

Digitized by Google

have imposed upon himself with it. No reader gifted with the humblest susceptibility to imaginative impressions can be deceived by it. He may be puzzled to explain why it is not poetry; but his native instincts infallibly consign it "to dumb forgetfulness a prey." He may not be able to say why it is unreadable, but he will not read it. The true solution is, that it is not a poem at all, but a very clever imitation of one; and poetry is a thing which does not admit of imitations, however clever. A man with Sir Bulwer Lytton's endowments can no more sit down and say, I will write a great epic poem, than a plain woman can resolve to have a handsome face. All he can do is what is here done. He can skilfully put together the materials which poets use. No man is absolutely destitute of fancy, or even of the true imaginative faculty; but for Bulwer to attempt to vivify a poem of twelve books with the amount of bardic fire and insight which is at his disposal, is as if one should attempt to light up St. Paul's with a single composition-candle. We had proposed to make it the subject of some detailed criticisms, but our heart has failed us. The mosaic splendour of strained expression and exaggerated sentiment which, as in the case of an over-dressed gentleman, gives an air of vulgarity not always deserved to his prose works, shines out in his poems in a yet higher degree. For the rest, they serve only to illustrate, with somewhat sharper lines, the deficiencies we have noted in his prose works; they are, indeed, only novels spoiled into verse, and they have scarcely readers enough to make it desirable that they should find commentators. With his novels it is different. Mr. Routledge's wonderfully cheap editions place them at the disposal of thousands, and they have attractions which cannot fail to secure them a wide perusal. But their claims to a more lasting reputation must depend on their real merits, not on their false pretensions, still less on the author's direct and hungry demand for applause. It is the voice of the fit audience though few, gaining fresh adherents from each new generation, which makes fame permanent. Bulwer has got a radically false notion, the presence and influence of which pervades all his works. He thinks the ideal, the poetical, is something separate from, something even in contrast with reality, and that we can in our creations transcend nature and improve upon the work of the Almighty; whereas all we can do is to give a special completeness within a certain narrow sphere, and concentrate the elements of perfection by confining ourselves to a particular aspect. No poet can grasp the great whole of the universe, explore its plan, or comprehend its beauty; he sees only patches of the world, he apprehends only fleeting glimpses of life: but the power is given him out of that which

Digitized by Google

he does see to make a whole of his own; to conceive, to create something; petty, indeed, and limited, compared with the vast creation from which it is drawn, and within which it stands, yet which moves on its own axle and is entire within itself. But it must rest on reality; there must be some sense in which imagination, even in its wildest flights, keeps harmony with the universe in which we live, or we recoil from its births as distorted and monstrous. Bulwer deserves sincere admiration for the zeal and perseverance with which he has devoted himself to his profession of a novel-writer; but he is a warning that no mere mastery of the machinery of art can compensate for a severance from the truths of nature.

Art. II.—MOMMSEN'S HISTORY OF ROME.

Römische Geschichte von Theodor Mommsen. Erster Band: Bis zur Schlacht von Pydna. Leipzig, 1854. Zweiter Band: Von der Schlacht von Pydna bis auf Sullas Tod. Berlin, 1855. Dritter Band: Von Sullas Tode bis zur Schlacht von Thapsus. Berlin, 1856. [*Roman History*, by Theodore Mommsen. 3 vols. Leipzig and Berlin, 1854-6.]

The Earliest Inhabitants of Italy: from Theodore Mommsen's History of Rome. Translated by George Robertson, with a Preface by Dr. Schmitz. London, 1858.

The history of Rome is the greatest of all historical subjects, for this simple reason, that the history of Rome is in truth synonymous with the history of the world. If history be read not as a mere chronicle of events, recorded as a form and remembered as a lesson, but as the living science of causes and effects, it will be found, that rightly to understand the destiny of what is truly called the Eternal City, our researches must be carried up to the very beginnings of history and tradition, and must be continued uninterruptedly to the present hour. Palestine, Greece, and Italy, are the three lands whose history contains the history of man. From Palestine we draw our religion; from Greece comes art and literature, and, in a manner, law and freedom. But the influence of Palestine and Greece is, to a large extent, a mere influence of example and analogy; and where it is a real influence of cause and effect, it is at best an indirect influence, propagated by the voices and the arms of strangers. The history of civilised man goes on in one unbroken tale from Theseus to our own day: but the drama shifts its scene and changes its actors; Greece can only reach us by

Digitized by Google

way of Italy; the Athenian speaks to modern Europe almost wholly through a Roman interpreter. We profess a religion of Hebrew origin; but the oracles of that religion speak the language of Greece, and reached us only through the agency of Rome. Of the old states of the world, the history of Carthage and of Palestine merges itself for ever in that of Rome. Greece, like one of her own subterranean rivers, merges herself also for a while, shrouds herself under the guise and title of her conqueror, and at last reappears at such a distance that some refuse to recognise her identity. To understand Roman history aright, we must know the history of the Semitic and Hellenic races which Rome absorbed, and of those races of the farther East which Rome herself never could subdue. We must go yet farther back; we must, by the aid of philological research, grope warily beyond the domain of history or legend. We must go back to unrecorded days, when Greek and Italian were one people; and to days more ancient still, when Greek, Italian, Celt, Teuton, Slave, Hindoo, and Persian, were as yet members of one undivided brotherhood. And if the historian of Rome is bound to look back, still more is he bound to look onwards. He has but to cast his eye upon the world around him to see that Rome is a still living and abiding power. The tongue of Rome is the groundwork of the living speech of south-western Europe; it divides our own vocabulary with the tongue of our Teutonic fathers. The tongue of Rome is still the ecclesiastical language of half Christendom; the days are hardly past when it was the common language of science and learning. The law of Rome is still quoted in our courts and taught in our universities; in other lands it forms the source and groundwork of their whole jurisprudence. Little more than half a century has passed since an Emperor of the Romans, tracing his unbroken descent from Constantine and Augustus, still held his place among European sovereigns, and, as Emperor of the Romans, still claimed precedence over every meaner potentate. And the title of a Roman office, the surname of a Roman family, still remains the highest object of human ambition, clutched at alike by worn-out dynasties and by successful usurpers. Go eastward, and the whole diplomatic skill of Europe is taxed to settle the affairs of a Roman colony, which, cut off alike by time and distance, still clings to its Roman language and glories in its Roman name. We made war but yesterday upon a potentate whose badge is the Roman eagle, on behalf of one whose capital has not yet lost the official title of New Rome. Look below the surface, and the Christian subjects of the Porte are found called and calling themselves Romans; go beyond the Tigris, and their master himself is known to the votary of Ali

Digitized by Google

simply as the Roman Cæsar. Even facts like these, which hardly rise above the level of antiquarian curiosities, still bespeak an abiding influence such as no other city or kingdom ever knew. And, far above them all, in deep and vast significance, towers the yet living phenomenon of the Roman Church and the Roman pontiff. The city of the Cæsars has for ages been, still is, and, as far as man can judge, will still for ages be, the religious centre, the holy place, the sacred hearth and home, of the faith and worship of millions on each side of the Atlantic. The successor of the Fisherman still in very truth sits on the throne of Nero, and wields the sceptre of Diocletian. It is indeed a throne rocked by storms; Frank and German may do battle for its advocacy; they have done so in ages past, and may do so for ages to come; but the power which has lived through the friendship and the enmity of Justinian and Liutprand, of Charlemagne and Otto, of the Henrys and the Fredericks, of Charles of Austria and Napoleon of France, may well live to behold the extinction, however distant it may be, of both the rival lines of Corsica and Hapsburg. Look back to the first dim traditions of the European continent, and you look not too far back for the beginnings of Roman history. Ask for the last despatch and the last telegram, and it will tell you that the history of Rome has not yet reached its end. It is in Rome that all ancient history loses itself; it is out of Rome that all modern history takes its source. Her native laws and language, her foreign but naturalised creed, still form the most important element in the intellectual life of every European nation; and, in a large portion of the European continent, they not only form an important element, but are the very groundwork of all.

The history of Rome dies away so gradually into the general history of the middle ages, that it is hard to say at what point a special Roman history should terminate. Arnold proposed to continue his history to the coronation of Charlemagne. Something may doubtless be said for this point, and something also for other points, both earlier and later. The Roman history gradually changes from the history of a city to the history of an empire. The history of the Republic is the history of a municipality, bearing sway over an ever-increasing subject territory; it differed only in scale from the earlier dominion of Athens and Carthage, from the later dominion of Bern and Venice. Under the Empire this municipal character died away, the Roman citizen and the provincial became alike the subjects of Cæsar; in process of time the rights, such as they were, of the Roman citizen were extended to all the subjects of the Roman monarchy. During the middle ages, the strange spec-

Digitized by Google

tacle was exhibited of a Greek and a German disputing the title of Roman Emperor, while Rome itself was foreign ground to both alike. But this was only the full development of a state of things which had begun to arise, which indeed could not fail to arise, long before the period commonly assigned for the termination of the genuine Roman Empire. The importance of the capital even under the Emperors, far surpassed that of the capital of a modern state. But it was no longer what it had been under the Republic. When from the Atlantic to the Euphrates all were alike Romans, the common sovereign of all ceased to be bound to Rome itself by the same tie as the old Consuls and Dictators. Rome gradually ceased to be an imperial residence. Constantine can hardly be said to have transferred the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople. He fixed at Constantinople a throne which had already left Rome, but which had as yet found no other permanent resting-place. His predecessors had reigned at Milan and Nikomedeia; his successors reigned at Ravenna and Constantinople. Constantius and Honorius did but occasionally visit Rome; more peacefully, indeed, but quite as transiently, as the Ottos and Henrys of a later age. And when the seat of government—always for a large part, sometimes for the whole—of the Roman Empire was permanently transferred to Constantinople, it is wonderful to see how truly that city became, as it was called, the New Rome. Greece, indeed, eventually asserted her rights over the old Megarian city; the Byzantine Empire gradually changed from a Roman to a Greek state; but at what moment the change was accomplished it is impossible to say. Up to the coronation of Charlemagne, the Byzantine monarch was at least nominal lord of the Old as well as the New Rome. With Charlemagne begin the various dynasties of German Cæsars, keeping up more local connection with Old Rome, but much less of the true Roman tradition, than their rivals at Byzantium. There is at least thus much to be said for the point chosen by Arnold, that down to the coronation of Charlemagne there was still one undisputed Roman Empire and Roman Emperor. Heraclius and Leo ruled Italy from Constantinople, as Diocletian had ruled it from Nikomedeia. After the year 800 East and West are formally divided; there are two Roman Empires, two Roman Emperors. Of these, the one is rapidly tending to become definitively German, the other to become definitively Greek.

We know not to what point the author of the history before us designs to carry on his work. As yet he has carried it up to the establishment of a practical monarchy under the first Cæsar. He shows how one Italian city contrived to conquer the whole Mediterranean world, and how inadequate the muni-

Digitized by Google

cipal government of that city proved itself to be to the task of ruling it. This is indeed a subject, and a very great subject, by itself; it is one of the greatest of political lessons; it is, in fact, the whole history of the City of Rome as the conquering and governing municipality; what follows is the history of the Empire, deriving its name from the city, but becoming gradually divorced from it. The point which M. Mommsen has now reached might almost be the termination of a "Geschichte von Rom;" but his work calls itself a "Römische Geschichte," and may therefore be fairly continued to almost any point which the historian may choose to select.

M. Mommsen's *Roman History* is, beyond all doubt, to be ranked among those really great historical works which do so much honour to our own day. We can have little hesitation in pronouncing it to be the best complete Roman history in existence. For a complete history, as we have just shown, we may call it, even as it now stands; it is not a mere fragment, like those of Niebuhr and Arnold. And even the ages with which Niebuhr and Arnold have dealt may be studied again with great advantage under M. Mommsen's guidance. And the important period between the close of Arnold's third volume and the opening of Mr. Merivale's history M. Mommsen has pretty well to himself among writers who have any claim to be looked upon as his peers. In short, we have now, for the first time, the complete history of the Roman Republic really written in a way worthy of the greatness of the subject. M. Mommsen is a real historian; his powers of research and judgment are of a very high order; he is skilful in the grasp of his whole subject, and vigorous and independent in his way of dealing with particular portions. And an English critic may be allowed to add, that his book is far easier and more pleasant to read than many of the productions of his learned fellow-countrymen.

At the same time, there are certain inherent disadvantages in the form and scale of the work. M. Mommsen's history, like Bishop Thirlwall's, is one of a series. Most readers of Bishop Thirlwall must have observed, that the fact of writing for a series, and a popular series, threw certain trammels around him during the early part of his work, from which he gradually freed himself as he went on. M. Mommsen's work is the first of a series, the aim of which seems to be to popularise —we do not use the word in a depreciatory sense—the study of classical antiquity among the general German public.* Dr.

* "Es wird damit eine Reihe von Handbüchern eröffnet, deren Zweck ist, das lebendigere Verständniss des classischen Alterthums in weitere Kreise zu bringen." (A series of handbooks is commenced by this work, whose purpose it is to bring the more living comprehension of classical antiquity within the reach of a wider circle of readers.)

Digitized by Google

Schmitz, in his preface to the chapters translated by Mr. Robertson, speaks of it as "a series of books intended for the upper classes in the public schools of Germany." Neither purpose would allow of much citation of authorities, or of much minute discussion of controverted points. In either case the writer speaks as a master to an audience whose business it is to accept and not to dispute his teaching. But this mode of writing has its disadvantages when applied by a bold and independent writer like M. Mommsen to a period of the peculiar character which belongs to the early history of Rome. That history, we need not say, is one which does not rest on contemporary authority. That Rome was taken by the Gauls appears to be the solitary event in the annals of several centuries which we can be absolutely sure was recorded by a writer who lived at the time.* Yet of these ages Dionysius and Livy give us a history as detailed as Thucydides can give of the Peloponnesian War, or Eginhard of the campaigns of Charles the Great. Till the time of Niebuhr, none but a solitary sceptic here and there hesitated to give to the first decade of Livy a credence as unhesitating as they could have given to Thucydides or Eginhard. And such sceptics commonly carried their unbelief to so unreasonable an extent as rather to favour the cause of a still more unreasonable credulity. Till Arnold wrote, Hooke's was the standard English History of Rome; there are apparently some even in our own generation who regard it as still entitled to the place of honour† Now, though Hooke's four stately quartos stand in due order on our shelves, we cannot boast of so intimate an acquaintance with them as with the smaller volumes of Arnold and Mommsen; but we do know enough of their contents to perceive that Hooke had no more idea of doubting the existence of Romulus than he had of doubting the existence of Cæsar. Then came the wonderful work of Niebuhr, which overthrew one creed and set up another. The tale which our fathers had believed on the authority of Livy sank to the level of a myth, the invention of a poet, the exaggeration of a family panegyrist; but in its stead our own youth was called upon to accept another tale, told with almost equal minuteness, on the personal authority of a German doctor who had only just passed away from among men. Niebuhr's theory, in fact, acted like a spell; it was not to argument or evidence that it appealed; his

* See the latter part of the 12th chapter of Sir G. C. Lewis's *Credibility of Early Roman History*. It seems clear that Greek contemporary writers did record the Gaulish invasion; possibly the account of Polybius may fairly represent their version of the event.

† We have seen the advertisement, but only the advertisement, of a history of the Roman emperors by the Rev. R. Lynam, the object of which is professedly to fill up the interval between Hooke and Gibbon.

Digitized by Google

followers avowedly claimed for him a kind of power of "divination." Since that time there has been, both in Germany and in England, a reaction against Niebuhr's authority. The insurrection has taken different forms: one party seem to have quietly relapsed into the unreasoning faith of our fathers.* Others are content to adopt Niebuhr's general mode of inquiry, and merely to reverse his judgment on particular points. This is the case with the able but as yet fragmentary work of Dr. Ihne.† Finally, there comes the party of absolute unbelief, whose champion is no less a person than the late Chancellor of the Exchequer. Beneath the Thor's hammer of Sir George Cornewall Lewis the edifice of Titus Livius and the edifice of Barthold Niebuhr fall to the ground side by side. Myths may be very pretty, divinations may be very ingenious, but the right honourable member for the Radnor boroughs will stand nothing but evidence which would serve to hang a man. Almost every child has wept over the tale of Virginia, if not in Livy, at least in Goldsmith. Niebuhr and Arnold connect the tragic story with profound historical and political lessons; but Sir Cornewall coldly asks, "Who saw her die?" and as nobody is ready to make the same answer as the fly in the nursery legend,—as Virginius and Icilius did not write the story down on a parchment roll, or carve it on a table of brass,—he will have nothing to say to any of them. "That the basis" of the decemviral story "is real, need not be doubted."‡ But that is all; how much is real basis, how much is imaginary superstructure, Sir Cornewall Lewis cannot undertake to determine.

To that large body of English scholars who have been brought up at the feet of Niebuhr, but who have since learned partially to reject his authority, there will be found something unsatisfactory, or perhaps more truly something disappointing, in M. Mommsen's way of dealing with the kings and the early republic. The spell of Niebuhr's fascination is one not easily broken: it is, in fact, much more than a spell; the faith with which we looked up to him in our youth was exaggerated, but it was not wholly misplaced. Sir G. C. Lewis has, beyond all doubt, done a permanent service to historical truth by convicting Niebuhr of an enormous amount of error in detail—of inaccuracies, inconsistencies, hasty inductions, instances of arrogant dogmatism; but we cannot think that he has shown Niebuhr's general system to be a wrong one. His method, at

* Sir G. C. Lewis quotes, as taking this line, "*Die Geschichte der Römer*, von F. D. Gerlach und J. J. Bachofen," with which we can boast of no further acquaintance.

† Researches into the History of the Roman Constitution. By W. Ihne, Ph. D. London, 1853.

‡ Credibility of Early Roman History, vol. ii. p. 292.

Digitized by Google

once destructive and constructive, is surely essentially sound. His doctrine that the current statement, probably far removed from the literal truth, still contains a basis of truth, Sir Cornewall Lewis himself does not venture wholly to deny. That a process, not indeed of "divination," but of laborious examination and sober reflection, may in many cases distinguish the truth from the falsehood, does not seem in itself unreasonable. Our own belief is, that Niebuhr's arrogant and self-sufficient dogmatism did but damage a cause which was essentially sound. Sir G. C. Lewis, while successfully demolishing the outworks, has made, in our judgment, no impression upon Niebuhr's main fortress. In such a state of mind, we cannot help looking at every page of the early Roman history as essentially matter of controversy; every step must be taken warily, no assertion must either be lightly accepted or lightly rejected, and no decision come to without weighing the arguments on one side and the other. It is therefore somewhat disappointing, not to say provoking, when in M. Mommsen's history of this period we find difficulties passed over *sicco pede;* when we find statements made which sometimes command our assent, sometimes excite our incredulity, but which, in either case, we never heard before, and M. Mommsen's grounds for adopting which we should, in either case, like to know. It is easy to see that M. Mommsen is quite capable of defending his own ground against either Niebuhr or Sir G. C. Lewis. We feel sure that he has gone carefully through every point of controversy in his own mind; we only wish that we ourselves might be admitted to witness the process as well as the result. We attribute no sort of blame to M. Mommsen for a defect which is inseparable from the scale and nature of his work. To have treated the whole subject controversially, to have examined every statement at length and cited every authority in full, would have swelled the book to an extent which would have been quite unpalatable either to the "upper classes of public schools" or to the "weitere Kreise" of the German advertisement. But it has the effect of rendering this part of M. Mommsen's work less valuable to the professed scholar than either that which precedes or that which follows it. He shines most in one portion in which he himself exercises a "divination" as ingenious and more sound than that of Niebuhr, and in another in which the whole business of the historian is to narrate and to comment upon facts whose general truth has never been called in question. The two subjects in dealing with which M. Mommsen has been most successful, and in truth equally successful, are the præ-historic age of the Italian nations, and the processes, military and diplomatic, by which a

Digitized by Google

single city of one of them attained to universal empire. It is greatly to his credit that he should have achieved such striking success in two subjects requiring such different modes of treatment.

It was from the chapters on the first subject, those published in an English translation* by Mr. Robertson, that we first became acquainted with M. Mommsen's history, and formed our own impression of its merits. And though these chapters are, we think, the very best portion of the book, yet the impression thus formed has not on the whole been diminished by our present more extended acquaintance with its original form. These chapters form one of the very best applications that we have ever seen of the growing science of comparative philology. They show how much we may learn, from evidence which cannot deceive, of the history of nations for ages before a single event was committed to writing. We are thus enabled to go back to days earlier even than those which are, in a manner, chronicled by poetry and tradition. In the Homeric poems we have our first written record of the Greek people; a record undoubtedly setting before us a real state of things, and, far more probably than not, some real events and some real persons. But the whole is embellished with so much that is clearly fabulous, that we cannot undertake to assert how much of truth there is at the bottom. We can hardly doubt that Greeks, in a certain stage of social progress, warred on the coast of Asia; their leader may very probably have been a king of Mykenæ, and he is just as likely to have been called Agamemnon as any thing else. The Homeric poems probably contain far more of real history than this; but much farther than this we cannot venture to go; the very abundance of our materials overwhelms us. But comparative philology goes far beyond the tale of Troy, far beyond the settlement of the Hellenes in the land of the many islands and of all Argos. And its evidence is the surest evidence of all, evidence thoroughly unconscious. Comparative philology and præ-historic archæology do for man what geology does for his dwelling-place. The mode of inquiry is identical. We may, indeed, conceive minds to which it would fail to carry conviction. The phenomena of human language and the phenomena of the earth's strata may

* Dr. Schmitz, in his preface to Mr. Robertson's translation, says, "On a careful comparison of the translation with the original, I have found it throughout correct; and the reader may feel assured that he has a faithful representation of the original." We do not know whether there is any edition of M. Mommsen's first volume later than our copy, from which Mr. Robertson may have made his translation. Compared with our edition, Mr. Robertson's is so far a faithful representation, that the substance of M. Mommsen's conclusions and arguments is there; but not only is the translation far from literal, but whole sentences are sometimes added, omitted, or transposed.

Digitized by Google

be alleged to be the result of accident. Different strata may not really represent different periods; the whole may be the result of one act of creation, on which the Creator may have impressed such appearances from its birth. So the resemblances between Greek, Teutonic, and Sanscrit, may be alleged to be no resemblances at all, to be accidental resemblances, to prove, if any thing, only the confusion of tongues at Babel. Certainly neither geology nor comparative philology can bring strict mathematical proof to bear upon the mind of a determined objector. Possibly, indeed, they might retort that even geometry itself has its postulates. When the geologist or philologist demands a certain amount of blind submission, he hardly does more than Euclid does himself, when he assumes, without proving, certain positions about parallels and angles, which, though undoubtedly true, are certainly not self-evident. Geology has made its way, it has become popular; hardly any one seriously disputes its conclusions. Comparative philology is still struggling; and its attendant, comparative mythology, is only just beginning to be heard of. The fact is, that to the uneducated mind the first principles of etymology are a great mystery. The real resemblances of words require a certain education to make them familiar; people catch at purely accidental similarities, and fail to grasp those which are essential. Multitudes of Englishmen learn German, and multitudes of Germans learn English,—learn perhaps to speak and write either tongue like natives,—without ever finding out that the initial *s* of one language answers to the initial *t* of the other. Multitudes learn French and Italian, and never get to know that in a large class of words *i* in one language replaces *l* in the other. We have no doubt that, out of the myriads of young ladies who learn both French and German, the large majority both of teachers and pupils believe French to be the language more nearly akin to English. Comparative philology only requires a little faith at the beginning: the believer soon begins to see with his own eyes, and shortly makes discoveries of his own, which he in turn finds the outer world loath to put any faith in. And we are not sure that perverted ingenuity does not sometimes do even more harm than unbelieving ignorance. We once came across a book, whose name we have forgotten, which undertook to prove the identity of the early inhabitants of Gaul and Britain by the resemblance between the existing Welsh and French languages. Now it would be hard to find any two descendants of the original Arian stock which have less to do with one another than the speech of the modern Cymrian and the modern Frenchman. But a few traces of original identity do remain. And while Latin of course forms

Digitized by Google

the whole groundwork of French, a few Latin words have, naturally enough, strayed into Welsh. Between these two classes our writer gathered together a considerable stock of Welsh words resembling the synonymous French ones. *Ceft* was undoubtedly cognate with *cheval; eglwys* still more clearly so with *église*. Whether our philologist got so far as to see that *gosper* and *vêpres* were cognate also, we do not remember. But, at any rate, his collections quite satisfied him that the Celt of Gaul and the Celt of Britain were closely akin; a proposition which nothing could lead any one to doubt except the fact that it had been supported by such an extraordinary argument.

We need hardly say that the comparative philology of M. Mommsen is not exactly of the same kind as that of our Celtic searcher after truth. Starting from the doctrine of the common origin of the Arian nations, a comparison of their several languages enables him to construct something like a map of their wanderings. Of course he does not exhaust this vast subject; he merely touches on it so far as it bears on his own theme of the history of Italy. But what he does give us certainly kindles a very strong desire to see the whole subject examined in full detail by the same hand. His method of inquiry is something of this kind. By taking two of the cognate languages, and seeing what kind of words they have in common and what kind of words are different, we may ascertain at what stage of the migration they separated from one another, and may get some notion of the degree of social progress which they had reached at that time. Let us take a very familiar instance, which is not given by M. Mommsen. The words *ὑπόδημα, calceus*, and *shoe*, are totally distinct; the inference is that the original Arian went barefoot, and that the Greek, the Italian, and the Teuton arrived independently at the important invention so independently named. But, farther than this, *schuh* and *shoe* (A.-S. *sceó*) are identical, while *strumpf* and *stocking* are quite distinct. May we not infer that the Teuton had arrived at the use of shoes before the keels of Hengest and Horsa left the ancestral continent, but that the further development of stockings was independently reached by England and by Germany? This, in fact, applied to times of which not even tradition has been preserved, is the line of argument employed by M. Mommsen. It is one partially opened both by Niebuhr* and by Dr. Prichard;† but it is more thoroughly worked out by M. Mommsen than we have

* The remark, that the agricultural nomenclature in Greek and Latin is identical, the warlike nomenclature commonly different, has been repeated over and over again.

† See his remarks on the names of the metals in the Arian languages, vol. iii. p. 10.

Digitized by Google

ever seen it before. Thus the names of domestic animals are for the most part common to the whole group of languages; but the terms for agricultural processes are different. The inference is, that the primeval Arians were a pastoral people, but had not as yet arrived at the stage of tilling the ground. The lowest stage of barbarism, in which man lives by hunting and fishing, was already passed, while Greek, Teuton, and Hindoo were still one people; but that higher point of civilisation, which is marked by the practice of agriculture, was not reached till after the European and Asiatic members of the family had separated. Each made the happy invention separately, or learned it separately from some other race which had outstripped both. But farther than this, though the Sanscrit agricultural terms are distinct, some of the most important words, the names of the instrument which *ears* the soil, as well as the *mill* where the produce is ground, are clearly cognate to Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Slavonic, Celtic, and Lithuanian. The inference is, that the first rudiments of agriculture were learned or invented after the Asiatic Arians had departed, but while the European Arians still formed a single people. A step farther still; in comparing Greek and Latin, we find not merely that a few of the simplest agricultural terms are cognate, but that a large portion of the agricultural vocabulary is all but identical. The inference is, that the Italians and the Hellenes remained one people after Teuton and Slave had separated themselves, and did not part till they had made some considerable advances in agricultural knowledge. It is most interesting also to watch the sort of names which these primeval inventors gave to their new discoveries. Those who have read—and every one ought to have read—Professor Max Müller's splendid Oxford Essay on Comparative Mythology, will remember how he shows that the various Arian languages and Arian creeds are mere fragments of a common stock. Every word, every myth, had originally a meaning; in their fragmentary state both words and myths have often become meaningless. The names given to the new inventions were not arbitrary, but full of meaning. Their roots are to be found in the Sanscrit, but in a different, commonly in a more extended sense. Thus *venas* is any thing pleasant, especially a pleasant drink; in Greek, Latin, and Teutonic, it obtains that more definite signification which attaches to *οἶνος*, *vinum*, and *wein*. *Aritram* in Sanscrit is identical with *ἄροτρον*; but *aritram* means not a plough, but an oar.* This supplies us with a most poetical bit of primeval etymology. The craft of the oarsman was more ancient than that of the ploughman; he who first used the plough saw his new implement throw up

* *Ἐρετμός* is therefore cognate with *ἄροτρον*.

Digitized by Google

the earth as he had seen the water thrown up by the stroke of the oar: naturally enough he called his new instrument by the name of the old one. We reverse his metaphor, and talk of "ploughing the wave."

We do not remember to have read any thing for a long time past with a more intense interest than these portions of M. Mommsen's book; and we should strongly recommend even those of our readers who may not care to go through the whole work in the original, at least to master those portions which have been translated by Mr. Robertson. His general conclusions with regard to the earliest inhabitants of Italy are these. Ancient Italy contained three distinct races: 1st, the Iapygians in the south; 2d, those whom M. Mommsen distinctively calls "Italians" in the middle; and 3d, the Etruscans in the north and north-west. Their geographical position would seem to show that this was the order in which the three nations entered the peninsula. Of the Iapygians we know but little; history presents them to us only in a decaying state, and all we know of their language is derived from certain as yet uninterpreted inscriptions. This evidence, however, tends to show that their language was Arian, distinct from the Italian,* and possessing certain affinities with the Greek. With this also falls in the fact that in historic times they adopted Greek civilisation with extraordinary ease. The Italians of M. Mommsen's nomenclature are the historical inhabitants of the greater portion of the peninsula. This is the nation the history of whose tongue and government becomes identical with that of civilised man; for of their language the most finished type is the Latin, and of their cities the greatest was Rome. The Etruscans M. Mommsen holds to be totally alien from the Italian nations; their language is probably Arian, but that is all that can be said. He rejects the story of their Lydian origin, and seems inclined to look upon Rhætia as the cradle of their race. He makes two periods of the Etruscan language, of which the former one is to be found in those inscriptions on vases at Cære, or Agylla, which Mr. Francis Newman† quotes as Pelasgian. Into the interminable Pelasgian controversy M. Mommsen hardly enters at all. For that controversy turns almost wholly on points of legend or tradition, hardly at all on comparative philology. On the other hand, he passes by in silence yet more complete some theories the evidence adduced for

* We are here merely expressing M. Mommsen's views, without binding ourselves either to accept or to refute them. We think, however, that he should at least have noticed the apparent identity of the names *Iapyges*, *Apuli*, and *Opici*, which, so far as it goes, tells against him.

† *Regal Rome*, p. 7. It is certainly hard to see how this sort of language can, as M. Mommsen supposes, have developed into the later Etruscan.

Digitized by Google

which is wholly of a philological kind. We mean the theory, supported by Mr. Newman and others,* which sees a Celtic, and specially a Gaelic element in the old Italian population, and that† which supposes a race of Basque or Iberian aborigines to have occupied Italy before the entrance of its historical inhabitants.

The Italians, in M. Mommsen's special sense, were then a people closely allied to the Hellenes, and had made considerable advances in cultivation before the two stocks separated. The Italian stock again divides itself into two, the Latin and the Umbro-Samnite, the difference between which he compares to that between Ionic and Doric Greek. The Umbro-Samnite again divides itself into the Oscan and the Umbrian, analogous, according to our author, to the Doric of Sicily and the Doric of Sparta. In M. Mommsen's own words:

"Each of these philological phenomena (Spracherscheinungen) is the result of, and the testimony to, an historical event; it may be inferred from them with complete certainty that a stock was separated from the common parent-stem of peoples and languages which included within itself the ancestors at once of the Greeks and of the Italians; that from this stock next the Italians branched away, and that they again parted into the Western and Eastern stock, and then the Eastern again into the Umbrians and Oscans. Where and when these separations took place, language certainly cannot tell us; and scarce does our audacious thought dare try to grope its way along the course of these revolutions (diesen Revolutionen ahnend zu folgen), of which the earliest doubtless happened long before that immigration which led the forefathers of the Italians across the Apennines."

Rome is, according to M. Mommsen, a city purely Latin, and the head of Latium. The Tiber was at once the boundary of Latium against the Etruscan stranger, and the natural highway for the primitive commerce of the early Latins. The site of Rome thus marks it out as at once the commercial capital of Latium and the great bulwark of the land against the Etruscan. Such were the earliest duties of Rome. It may have been merely by a happy accident that one of the Latin cities was placed on a site which enabled it to assume them; it may have been founded expressly to discharge them, either by the common will of the Latin confederacy, or by the wisdom of some clear-sighted founder of unrecorded times. Rome may have been either the eldest or the youngest of Latin cities. But probability seems greatly in favour of her being rather the child than the parent of the League. All tradition represents Rome as an Alban, that is a Latin, colony. As soon as we get any thing like a glimpse of real history, we find Rome essentially

* Regal Rome, pp. 17 et seqq. † See Prichard, iii. 43.

Digitized by Google

a Latin city, we find her unmistakably predominant among the cities of Latium. But Rome is not only far greater than any other Latin city; she appears as something in a manner outside the League, in the very position, in short, likely to be assumed by a younger state which had outstripped its elders. She is a Latin city, she is closely connected with the other Latin cities; but she is hardly an integral member of their confederacy; in the times of her greatest recorded weakness she treats with the League as an equal; the single city of Rome is placed on an equal footing with the aggregate of the other thirty. And from the advantage which a single powerful state always has over a confederacy of smaller ones, the equal alliance between Rome and Latium grew into a practical supremacy of Rome over Latium. Rome under her kings clearly possessed this power, and, if she lost it by her revolution, she recovered it by the league of Spurius Cassius. Rome and Latium were formerly equal allies; the Hernicans were united in the league on the same terms; but it is impossible to doubt that Rome was the soul of the confederacy during the whole time of its existence. The Æquian and Volscian invasions, again, fell far more heavily upon the Latin allies than upon Rome herself. Many Latin cities were wholly lost, others were greatly weakened. These processes would of course greatly increase the proportionate importance of Rome; they would bring the Latins to look more and more to Rome as the natural head of their nation, and to demand, not independence, but union on closer and juster terms. The demands of the Latin allies at the outbreak of the great Latin War are a sufficient commentary on the relations between Rome and Latium. The feeling towards Rome was clearly that of excluded citizens under an oligarchy, rather than that of an oppressed nation under a foreign government. They do not ask to shake off the Roman yoke, to forsake the Roman alliance; they ask instead to become wholly Roman themselves. They are ready to abolish the Latin name and the separate existence of the Latin League. Their demands are almost identical with those of the plebeians in Rome itself hardly a generation earlier. As the Licinian laws required one consul to be a plebeian, the Latins now require that one consul shall be a Latin. The senate was to be half Latin; the Latin cities would probably have assumed the position of Roman tribes. Terms like these Rome held it beneath her dignity to grant; but after the conquest of Latium, the mass of the Latin nation did gradually acquire Roman citizenship in one way or another. This is, in short, the constantly repeated history of Rome and her allies, from the earliest to the latest period. Men do not seek to get rid of Rome as their ruler; they wish to

Digitized by Google

become Romans, and, in that character, to help to rule both themselves and others. The first recorded struggle, that between patrician and plebeian, is in its origin much more truly a struggle between distinct nations than between different orders in the same nation. But the demand of the plebeians is not to abolish the patrician government, but to obtain a share in it for themselves. It is only in some desperate moment, when every demand is refused, that they resort to the extreme measure of a "secession;" that is, in short, of leaving Rome, and founding a new city for themselves. To the struggle between patrician and plebeian succeeds the struggle between Roman and Latin; the Latin is only driven into a war against Rome when he cannot obtain his desire of incorporation with Rome. The Samnite wars, including those with their Etruscan, Gaulish, and Epeirot allies, reduce the whole of Italy to the condition of dependent alliance with Rome. Italy is now gradually Latinised; but at the same time the yoke of Rome is found to be no light one. But no indications appear of any desire to throw it off, except in such strange exceptional cases as the solitary revolts of Falerii and Fregellæ. The Italians gradually assume the feelings of Romans; like the plebeians, like the Latins, they demand not independence, but complete incorporation. The claims of the Italian allies formed one of the most important political questions of the seventh century of the city. The rights of the Italians, admitted by the best men both of the senatorial and of the democratic party, were opposed to the vulgar prejudices of Senate and People alike. When each party had equally failed them, then the allies took arms, not for Samnite or Marsian independence, but for a new Rome of their own, a premature republican Constantinople, the city Italy. This new Rome, like the old, had its senate, its consuls, its prætors, its citizenship shared by every member of an allied commonwealth. Like the Latins of the fifth century, the Italians of the seventh were at last admitted piecemeal to the rights for which they contended. Every Italian was now a Roman; save where Hellenic influence had taken permanent root, all Italy was now Latinised. But by this time vast regions out of Italy had begun to be Latinised also. Latin civilisation spread over Spain, Gaul, and Africa; the policy of the Emperors tended to break down the distinction between citizen and provincial, and at length the franchise of the Roman city was extended to all the subjects of the Roman empire. Western Europe became thoroughly Romanised; even the Greek and his eastern proselytes became Roman in political feeling, and gloried in that Roman name which some of them still retain. In Syria and Egypt alone did the old national

Digitized by Google

feelings abide. Elsewhere, save some wild tribe here and there, the Mediterranean world was wholly Roman. Its unity was constantly rent by civil wars, by the claims of rival Emperors, by peaceful division between imperial colleagues. But from the Atlantic to Mount Taurus no Roman citizen thought of divesting himself of his Roman character. Emperors reigned in Gaul and Britain; but they were not Gallic or British sovereigns; they were still Roman Cæsars, holding a portion of the Roman Empire, and striving after the possession of the whole. During the whole history of Rome, both Old and New, from the first mythical King to the last phantom Emperor, it would be hard to find a case of a city or province, once thoroughly incorporated into the Roman system, which voluntarily separated itself from its Roman allegiance. Provinces might helplessly submit to foreign conquerors, but they never asserted their own national independence.* Till Monophysite Egypt welcomed a deliverer in the Mussulman Arab, it does not appear that barbarian invaders ever met with actual cooperation within the Roman territory. Italy, indeed, in the seventh century of our era, revolted against the Eastern Emperor, and gave herself of her own free will to a Frankish master; but he came as a Roman Patrician, a Roman Cæsar, to assert the rights of the Old Rome against the usurpations of the New. Through the whole of this long series of centuries, all who come in contact with the original Romulean city,—the plebeian, the Latin, the Italian, at last the inhabitants of the whole Mediterranean world,—all gradually obtained the Roman name; and none of them willingly forsook it.

The workings of a law which remained in full force for above two thousand years have carried us far away from M. Mommsen's immediate subject. And yet we have perhaps not mentioned the earliest instance of its working. Rome, as we have said, is in his view strictly a Latin city. He indignantly rejects the notion of the Romans being a mongrel race, "ein Mischvolk," a union of elements from the three great races of Italy. Of the three old patrician tribes, the Titienses are, indeed, probably of Sabine origin; but they were Sabines thoroughly Latinised, who at most, as other incorporated nations did in later times, introduced some Sabine rites into the Roman religion. The really Latin character of Rome was no more affected than when, under the early Republic, the Sabine Attus Clausus, with his clan and following, were converted into the Claudian tribe. Here, then, in days totally unrecorded, before the struggles of Latin or of plebeian,

* Whether the so-called revolt of Britain and Armorica in the fifth century is to be counted as a solitary exception, depends on two very difficult questions: 1st, How far had Britain and Armorica really become Roman? 2d, What is the meaning of the not very intelligible narrative in the last book of Zosimus?

Digitized by Google

we find the first instance of that inherent power of assimilation or incorporation on the part of the Roman commonwealth, which continued alike under kings, consuls, and Cæsars. The legend of Romulus is, in M. Mommsen's view, a comparatively late one, as is shown by the name of the eponymous hero being formed from the later form of the name of the city and people. The oldest form is not *Romani*, but *Ramnes*, that of the first patrician tribe; and that form points to the name of the Eternal City as being originally synonymous with our own Woottons and Bushburys: "so dass der Name *Roma* oder *Rama* vielleicht ursprünglich die Wald- oder Buschstadt bezeichnet."

The other point, besides the primeval archæology, where we thought M. Mommsen's treatment of his subject worthy of special admiration, was what we may call the diplomatic history of Rome. In Rome's gradual acquisition of universal empire two great stages are marked, the complete subjugation of Italy, and the conquest of Macedonia at the battle of Pydna. Our author quite rejects the notion that any deliberate and systematic scheme of universal dominion actuated the Roman Senate and People through successive centuries. War and conquest were undoubtedly as agreeable to them as they have commonly been to most other nations; but their distant acquisitions were in some cases almost forced upon them, and they continually drifted into foreign wars as much through the result of circumstances as from any deliberate intent. Thus it would certainly seem to have been throughout the period of Rome's greatest glory. Rome was at the true summit of her greatness, within and without, in the fifth and sixth centuries of her existence. The days of her early dissensions were over, those of her later dissensions had not yet arrived. The old political struggle between patrician and plebeian had become a thing of the past, the far more fearful struggle between rich and poor was still a thing of the future. The Romans of those ages not only knew how to win victories, they had learned the far harder lesson how to endure defeat. The victories of Pyrrhus and Hannibal would have broken the spirit of almost every other nation of any age. But the endurance of Rome was never shaken; she could endure to proclaim publicly in her forum, "We have been overcome in a great battle," and her senators could go forth to thank the defeated demagogue* who had not despaired of the Republic. Her political constitution may seem an anomaly; the sovereign senate side by side with the no less sovereign popular assembly, the consul all-powerful to act, the tribune all-powerful to forbid, may seem inconsistent, impracticable, unable to be worked. But the proof is in two centuries with nothing

* M. Mommsen seems to us unduly harsh on M. Terentius Varro, as well as on C. Flaminius. Arnold does them far more justice.

Digitized by Google

worthy to be called a civil commotion; the proof is in the conquest of Italy, in the repulse of Pyrrhus and of Hannibal, in tributary Carthage and tributary Macedonia. What the Roman system in these ages really was, is shown by the men whom it provided; men always great enough, and never too great; men ready to serve their country, but never dreaming of enslaving it. What was the true Roman national being is revealed to us in the hereditary virtues of the Decii and the Fabii, in the long-descended Scipio and in the lowly-born Curius and Regulus; we see it allied with Grecian culture in Titus Quinctius Flamininus, and standing forth in old Italian simplicity in Marcus Porcius Cato. Rome in these ages bore her full crop of statesmen and soldiers, magistrates and orators, ready to be the rulers of one year and the subjects of the next. But as yet she produced neither a traitor nor a tyrant, nor, in any but the older and nobler sense, a demagogue. We are not quite sure that M. Mommsen does full justice to this splendid period; he understands, but he does not always feel; his narrative constantly seems cold and tame after that of Arnold. We miss the brilliant picture of the great men of the fifth century,* we miss the awful vision of Hannibal,† we miss the pictures of Gracchus and his enfranchised slaves, and of Nero's march to the "fateful stream" of the Metaurus. Both tell us how the old Marcellus died by a snare which a youth might have avoided; but in how different a strain! M. Mommsen gives us, indeed, the facts with all truth and clearness:

"When out on an insignificant reconnaissance, both consuls were surprised by a party of African cavalry; Marcellus, already a sexagenarian, fought boldly the unequal battle till he sank dying from his horse; Crispinus escaped, but died of the wounds received in the skirmish."‡

Turn we now to Arnold:

"Crispinus and the young Marcellus rode in covered with blood and followed by the scattered survivors of the party; but Marcellus, six times consul, the bravest and stoutest of soldiers, who had dedicated the spoils of the Gaulish king, slain by his own hand, to Jupiter Feretrius in the Capitol, was lying dead on a nameless hill; and his arms and body were Hannibal's."§

The policy of Rome during these two glorious ages had, according to M. Mommsen, for its primary object, first the acquisition, and then the retention, of a firm dominion in Italy. Its dealings with the provinces and with foreign states were simply means to secure this primary end. Italy was won; its various states were reduced to the condition of dependent allies. This

* Arnold, ii. 272.
† Ibid., iii. 70.
‡ Mommsen, i. 464.
§ Arnold, iii. 354.

Digitized by Google

condition deprived them of all practical sovereignty, and made them in all their external relations the passive subjects of Rome. But they retained their own communal governments; they served Rome with men, not with money; and Rome's constant wars gave their individual citizens many opportunities of acquiring both wealth and honour. Doubtless, as they had constantly more and more to do with distant nations, they began to feel a wider Italian patriotism, and to glory in the triumphs which they helped to win for the greatest of Italian cities. This feeling on the one hand, and on the other hand the occasional excesses of Roman officers in more degenerate times, combined to bring about that yearning after full Roman citizenship which we have so often mentioned already. The old Latin League no longer existed; it had partly vanished from the earth, partly had been incorporated with Rome. But its place was in a manner filled by those Latin colonies, those children of Rome, which, for some not very apparent reason, were invested with the Latin, and not the full Roman franchise. These were, in fact, Roman garrisons, scattered over the peninsula, serving to watch over the allied states, and to keep them in due dependence. Such was the state of things from the Rubicon to the Strait of Messina. But the full and safe possession of Italy involved something more. Italy had no natural frontier nearer than the Alps; Cisalpine Gaul had therefore to be conquered. And looking beyond the Adriatic and the Libyan Sea, Rome had to settle her relations with the Carthaginian republic and the Macedonian kingdom. The balance of power was in those days an idea altogether unknown. To a modern statesman, transported into the third century B.C., the great problem would have been to preserve such a balance between Rome, Carthage, and Macedonia. No rational English, French, or Russian diplomatist wishes to make any one of the other countries subject or tributary to his own; his object is not positively to weaken the rival state, but merely to repress any undue encroachment. But from a Roman point of view, for Rome to be strong, it was necessary that Carthage and Macedonia should be absolutely weak. It may possibly be doubted whether the modern system does not bring about just as many material evils as the other; but the theory is quite different. A war between Rome and Carthage could terminate only in the destruction, or at least the deep humiliation, of one or other of the contending powers. But let France and Austria go to war to-morrow, and the result will not be that either Paris or Vienna will cease to be the capital of a powerful and independent state; those who pay the price will be the unhappy scapegoats of Lombardy or Wallachia. But in the view of a Roman statesman, Italy could only be strong at the direct expense of

Digitized by Google

Carthage and Macedonia. A first war with Rome, like a modern war, involved at most only pecuniary compensation, or the loss of some distant dependency; but a second carried with it the loss of political independence; a third involved total destruction. Thus the first Punic war cost Carthage Sicily and Sardinia, the second made Carthage a dependent state, the third swept her away from the face of the earth. The first Macedonian war had results little more than diplomatic; the second reduced Macedonia to a dependent condition; the third annihilated the kingdom, cutting it up into four separate commonwealths; the fourth, if it deserve the name, made Macedonia a Roman province. The difference in the processes of the two conquests is a good commentary on M. Mommsen's theory. The problem was for Rome to preserve a direct and unshaken dominion over Italy; every thing beyond was only means to this end. But Sicily and Sardinia were natural appendages of Italy; their possession by a state of equal rank might be directly dangerous. Rome therefore required their cession; that of Sicily by the terms of peace with Carthage, that of Sardinia as the price of its continuance a few years after. Their possession was almost as necessary as the possession of Cisalpine Gaul. But Macedonia had no such threatening possessions. The first treaty with Philip was concluded nearly on equal terms; the Macedonian frontier was simply "rectified" by the loss of some points and the addition of others. Macedonia, again, had to pass through a more gradual descent than Carthage. Even the third war, the war of Pydna, did not involve desolation, or even formal incorporation with the Roman dominion; clearly because Macedonia had sent no Hannibal to Cannæ, and her total humiliation was not so clearly an Italian necessity as that of Carthage.

The original Roman system, then, was to maintain direct rule in Italy; to tolerate no equal power, but to weaken all neighbouring states, to reduce them to what M. Mommsen calls the condition of clientage. But it is evident that this system could not fail to lead Rome more and more into the vortex of distant conquest. It is just like our own dominion in India, where we have our immediate provinces and our client princes exactly analogous to those of Rome. In either case, when intermeddling has once begun, there is no way to stop it. Policy, or even sheer self-defence, leads to one conquest, that conquest leads to another; till at last annexation is loved for its own sake, the independent state becomes a dependency, and the dependency becomes a province. The Roman policy of surrounding Italy with a circle of weak states did not answer; it exposed her all the sooner to the necessity of a struggle with the powerful states which still remained behind. Make Macedonia first

Digitized by Google

a dependency and then a province; that process only involves the next stage of doing the like by Syria: do the like by Syria; that only involves an attempt to do the like by Parthia, with which the like cannot be done. In this last particular case, M. Mommsen shows very clearly that the result of the Roman policy was most hurtful alike to the immediate interests of Rome and to the general interests of the world. The monarchy of the Seleucidæ, the truest heirs of Alexander's empire, whatever else it was, was at least, then and there, champion of European cultivation. It was the bulwark of the West against the East, the successor of Miltiades and Agesilaos, the precursor of Leo the Isaurian and Don John of Austria. Now the policy of Rome brought the Syrian monarchy to precisely that point in which the King of Antioch could not defend his own eastern borders, and in which it was not as yet either the palpable duty or the palpable interest of Rome to defend them for him. The effect of this is pointed out by M. Mommsen in a brilliant passage, which shows how well he understands the relation of his own immediate subject to the general history of the world.

"This transposition (Umwandlung) of international relations in central Asia is the turning-point in the history of antiquity. In place of the flowing tide of peoples which had hitherto poured from West to East, and which had found its last and highest expression in the great Alexander, the ebb now begins. From the date of the foundation of the Parthian kingdom all the Hellenic elements, which might yet have held their ground in Bactria and on the Indus, are not only lost, but even western Iran shrinks back again into the track abandoned centuries ago, but not yet obliterated. *The Roman Senate sacrifices the first essential fruit of the policy of Alexander, and therewith initiates that reactionary movement whose last offshoots end in the Alhambra of Granada and in the great Mosque of Constantinople.* So long as the country from Ragæ and Persepolis to the Mediterranean still obeyed the King of Antiochia, so long Rome's power too extended to the border of the Great Desert; the Parthian kingdom, not because it was so very powerful, but because its centre of gravity was far away from the coast, in central Asia, could never become one of the dependencies of the Mediterranean empire. Since the time of Alexander, the world had belonged to the Western nations alone, and the East appeared to be, in relation to them, only what America and Australia became in later times in relation to the European nations. With Mithridates I. the East again entered the circle of political movement. The world had again two masters."*

But mixed up with much of the policy of Rome's eastern

* Vol. ii. p. 59. We are not quite sure, however, that M. Mommsen has not too closely identified the Parthian dominion with the native Persian race and religion. The rise of Parthia was, as he describes it, a great reaction of the East against the West. But the Parthians seem to have been not quite impervious either to Christianity or to Greek cultivation. The final blow was struck by the reëstablishment of a really national Persian state in the third century A.D.

Digitized by Google

dealings there was, according to M. Mommsen, a large amount of what would nowadays be called philhellenic feeling. That the Roman senate, as Bishop Thirlwall says, surpassed all recorded governments in diplomatic skill, we can readily admit; and yet it need not be necessary to attribute all their doings to some unfathomably subtle line of policy. To hold that Rome acted, through a long series of years, on a deliberate plan of gradual conquest; that she systematically made use of her allies, and cast them off when they were done with; that she formed a league with a state with the settled purpose of reducing it to a dependency in the next generation, and to a province in the generation after that,—is really attributing to what is, after all, an abstraction rather too much of the attributes of a living and breathing man. The characteristics both of the Roman nation and of particular Roman families have so strong a tendency to pass on from father to son, that Rome does assume something more like a personal existence than almost any other state. Venice and Bern are the two nearest parallels in recent times. But the policy even of Rome or Venice still, after all, means the policy of the men who at successive times took the lead in the Roman and Venetian republics. Even in those grave senates every thing was not so much matter of precedent and tradition that no fluctuating circumstances, no individual passions could ever affect their deliberations. States, like individuals—for the decisions of states are really the decisions of individuals—commonly act from mixed motives; and as most men would feel no small difficulty in analysing their own motives, we may feel still more difficulty in analysing those of the Roman senate. So much generosity as to exclude all care for self, so much selfishness as to exclude all thought for others, are both of them the exception in human affairs. Act generously, provided it does not seriously damage yourself, is, we fancy, the commonest rule both with rulers and with private men. There is no occasion to suppose that when Flamininus proclaimed liberty to Greece, it was mere hypocrisy on the part either of him or of his government. But we cannot suppose that either Flamininus or the Roman senate would have knowingly sacrificed a jot of Rome's real power or real interest to any dream of philhellenic generosity. It is easy, however, to see that a strong philhellenic feeling did really exist in the mind of Flamininus and of many other Romans of his day. Greece was then newly opened to Roman inquirers; Greek civilisation and literature were beginning to make a deep impression upon the Roman mind, both for good and for evil. The famous cities of Greece were already places of intellectual pilgrimage. The natural result was that, for at least a generation, both Greek allies and Greek

Digitized by Google

enemies received better treatment than allies or enemies of any other race. Achaia and Athens were favoured and, as it were, humoured to the highest degree not clearly inconsistent with Roman interests. But the tide must have turned considerably before Mummius destroyed Corinth, even before L. Æmilius Paullus was required, against his will, to destroy the Epeirot cities. The phenomenon may well have been analogous to one of our own days with regard to the same land. A generation back men looked for results from the emancipation of Greece which were utterly extravagant and chimerical. The fashion is now to decry every thing to do with independent Greece, and to deny the real progress she has made, because impossible expectations have not been realised. In short, a generation of Mummii has, among ourselves, succeeded to a generation of Flaminini. M. Mommsen, we should observe, by no means shares or approves of the philhellenism of the victor of Kynoskephalai. He has throughout a way of dealing more freely with established heroes, of casting about censure with a more unsparing hand, than is altogether consistent with the sort of vague and half superstitious reverence with which one cannot help regarding the men of old. Indeed, he sometimes passes from criticism and censure into the regions of actual sarcasm, almost of mockery; he deliberately quizzes "Plutarch's men" with as little compunction as *Punch* quizzes the men of our own time. Contemporary events have brought this home very strongly to our mind. While reading M. Mommsen's account of what we may call the Lord High Commissionership of T. Quinctius Flamininus, we could more than once have fancied we were reading an attack in the *Times* or the *Saturday Review* on him whom modern Hellas delights to honour as *ὁ περίφημος καὶ φιλέλλην Γλάδστων*.

M. Mommsen, following Polybius, makes the battle of Pydna one great stage in his history. Rome's work of conquest was now practically over; there remained little to do but to gather in the spoil. She had yet many battles to fight, many provinces to win, but there was no longer any Mediterranean power able to contend with her on equal terms for the lordship of the Mediterranean world. And now she began to show how little adapted her constitution was to administer a universal empire. Men generally look to this period of Roman history for arguments for or against monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy. Possibly all such may be found; but the most truly distinctive lesson which it teaches is one into which those questions do not immediately enter. That lesson is one which, to the nineteenth century, has become almost matter of curiosity; but it was a practical one as long as Venice ruled over Corfu and Kephal-

Digitized by Google

lenia, as long as the Pays de Vaud obeyed the mandates of the oligarchy of Bern. That lesson is this, one well set forth by M. Mommsen in several passages, that a municipal government is unfitted to discharge imperial functions. Such a municipal government may be either aristocratic or democratic; but in either case it governs solely in the interest of the ruling city. It need not be tyrannical—Bern was eminently the reverse; but the subject states, the provinces or dependencies, have no share in their own government, and their interest is not the object of those who rule them. This warning will of course apply to all states possessing colonies or dependencies; but the cause is not the same. The Roman government, with its senate, its popular assembly, its annually elected magistrates, was a government essentially municipal; it was fitted only for the government of a single city. It had, indeed, as if its founders had foreseen the danger, something of a representative element from the beginning. The ruling principle of the ancient city governments, aristocratic and democratic alike, was, we need hardly say, that every member of the ruling class, be that class the widest democracy or the narrowest oligarchy, should have his personal share in the government, should give his direct vote in the sovereign assembly. But the territory of the Roman city extended, at a very early period, over a region far too wide to have allowed every Roman citizen to have habitually appeared in the *comitia*. Had the voting gone by heads, the residents in the city would have had it all their own way. This was obviated by the tribe system. Each of the thirty-five tribes had one vote. On the day of election or legislation, half a dozen citizens from a distant tribe had the same voice as the hundreds or thousands of a nearer one. In fact, as Niebuhr suggests, those half-dozen rural voters might really be the chosen delegates of the hundreds or thousands of their neighbours. Hence the importance of the legislation of Appius Claudius, and of the counter-legislation of Fabius and Decius. Appius divided the freedmen, the *turba forensis*, the Lambeth and Tower Hamlets of Rome, among all the then existing tribes; that is, he put the votes of all the tribes into their hands. Fabius and Decius removed them all into the four city tribes, so that they could command four votes only. But even with this modification, the Roman popular assembly became, what it never became at Athens, a body utterly unmanageable, which could only cry "Yea, yea," to the proposals of the magistrates, and in which debate was out of the question. And, after all, senate and assembly alike represented purely Roman interests; the allies, still less the provinces, had no voice in either. It was as if the liverymen of London passed laws and appointed to

Digitized by Google

offices for the whole United Kingdom. Under the municipal system of Rome there was no remedy. Had Italy and the world been received into the old tribes, or mapped out into new ones, it would only have made the assembly yet more unwieldy than it was already. A representative or a federal system would have solved the problem without any sacrifice of liberty. But a representative system the ancient world never knew; though the Achaian, the Lycian, though, as we have seen, the Roman system itself, hovered on the verge of it. Federalism was, indeed, at work in its most perfect form in Lycia and Achaia; but it would have been in vain to ask Roman pride to have allowed conquered nations to set up senates and assemblies of equal rank with those of Rome herself. The monarchy of the Cæsars cut the knot another way: the provincial could not be raised to the level of the citizen, but the citizen could be degraded to the level of the provincial. They both now found a common master. The provincials no doubt benefited by the change. It is, indeed, true that the municipal origin of the Roman Empire, and the covert way in which monarchy gradually crept in under republican forms, caused the capital to retain an undue importance, and made first Rome and then Constantinople to flourish at the cost of the provinces. But the evil was far less under the Empire than under the Republic. The best Emperors did what they could to govern in the interest of the whole Empire, and the worst Emperors were most terrible to those to whom they were nearest. The overthrow of the Roman Republic, the establishment of the Cæsarean despotism, was the overthrow of the very life of the Roman city; but to the Roman Empire it was a bitter remedy for a yet more bitter disease. It proves nothing whatever in favour of despotism against liberty; it establishes no law that democracy must lead to military monarchy. Athens and Schwitz had to bend to foreign invaders; but no Prytanis or Landamman ever accomplished a *coup-d'état*. What it does prove is, that a single city cannot govern an empire; that for a subject province one master is less formidable than 700,000. Those 700,000 citizens were, among themselves, a frantic mob rather than a legitimate democracy: as against the millions of Roman subjects from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, they were an oligarchy as narrow and exclusive as if they had all been written in the Golden Book of Venice. The experience of the last age of Roman history proves nothing against any form of liberty, be it Athenian democracy, English monarchy, or Swiss or Achaian federalism. If it gives us any immediate practical warning, it is a warning against the claims of overgrown capitals. It has lately become the fashion to call the seat of government

Digitized by Google

the "metropolis," and the rest of the kingdom the "provinces;" names unknown to English law, and alien to all English feeling. If we begin to give eight members to the Tower Hamlets, the words may possibly begin to have a meaning; and Manchester and Arundel, Caithness and Tipperary, may alike have to look out for a Fabius and a Decius to deliver them from the *turba forensis* of a single overgrown city.

Art. III.—SOCIAL INNOVATORS AND REFORMERS.

Social Innovators and their Schemes. By William Lucas Sargant. London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858.

1848. *Historical Revelations: inscribed to Lord Normanby.* By Louis Blanc. London: Chapman and Hall, 1858.

An Outline of the various Social Systems and Communities which have been founded on the Principle of Coöperation. London: Longmans, 1844.

Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet: an Autobiography. By the Author of "Yeast," &c. Third Edition. London: Chapman and Hall, 1852.

Self-help by the People: History of Coöperation in Rochdale. By George Jacob Holyoake. London: Holyoake and Co., 1858.

There is no more promising feature in the social life of the present age than the ever-increasing importance which the interests of the lower orders assume in the estimation of the higher. The great peril of civilisation is the want of sympathy between different classes of society which inevitably arises from the decay of the old relations between them, and the gradual assertion of irresponsibility on the one hand, and of independence on the other. There is grave danger of "the division of society into horizontal layers," ill cemented together by ties of interest or affection; and it is a cheering thing to see that those who have leisure and education to comprehend the duties and difficulties of this condition are every year becoming more and more sensible of the weight of the obligations which still exist, and the strength of the natural bonds which no merely economic or social changes can weaken or dissever. The old and visible connection of patron and client, lord and vassal, in all its manifold forms, is rapidly disappearing; and as it formed the strongest and closest tie between the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, the men of thought

Digitized by Google

and the men of toil, we may well feel anxious in witnessing its dissolution. In the ages to which it belongs hardly any other bond would have been sufficiently powerful to hold society together. The strong would have been restrained by no sense of general human obligations from trampling on the weak; there was needed a special and personal relation between them as protector and dependent. Reverence for law, order, and right, would hardly have kept the poor from violent attempts to despoil the rich; but the mutual regard generated by habitual dependence and avowed responsibility secured the patron from the violence of those over whom he held a sort of paternal authority. Now that these ties are severed, there is still sufficient force in the improved sense and knowledge of all classes, and in the universal reverence for law which is especially characteristic of Englishmen, to prevent any violent disturbance of social order. But there might nevertheless be much reason to fear a gradual and insensible separation between the component elements of society; a total alienation of feeling, interest, and sympathy between its various classes; a complete isolation of every rank and order in its own narrow circle of thought and action,—which might work eventually worse disasters than a single and violent convulsion. From the terrible shocks of a social revolution a strong and healthy community may hope to recover; the gradual corruption of social disorganisation weakens the most powerful beyond the hope of cure.

This might have been our case, and probably would, if the moral improvement of the higher classes had not kept pace with the material emancipation of the lower,—if, as the immediate and special relations between them were modified or abrogated, deeper and more general relations had not been brought into view,—if the obligations of Christian neighbourhood had not succeeded those of feudal protection in the minds of the rich and influential, and if the ties of a common humanity had not been more strongly felt as those of direct dependence were one by one dissolved. That this has been so, in England at least, we have much reason to rejoice; that it is increasingly so is the most hopeful promise of our future; that it is not so in all cases,—that the regard of the rich for the poor is far less deep and less general than it ought to be,—is the worst evil of our present. It is this feature of English society, the existence of many of the feudal sentiments in a purer form, and under a higher sanction, when feudalism has ceased to be,—the fact that still "the great man helps the poor, and the poor man loves the great,"—that has given to England all the peculiar stability and security which she

Digitized by Google

alone among the nations possesses; and it is precisely where this is the least the case—in our great cities and commercial towns, where the rich and the poor are most separate and most antagonistic—that discontent is loud, and that the evils of our present state of transition are most keenly felt. There the individual relations of employer and employed, of capitalist and labourer, are narrow and limited, rarely extending far beyond the walls of the factory or the warehouse; there the working man is most independent, and the man of wealth, at once from want of leisure, want of opportunity, and want of inclination, is least disposed and least able to concern himself personally in the well-being of those who are indeed his neighbours, but who are not his dependents. There the gulf between the higher and the lower classes is fearfully wide; and it requires much courage, and some judgment, to overleap it. Flinging gold and silver into it will not close it, any more than it would suffice to close the yawning chasm in the Forum of old Roman legend. If money would do what is wanted, if it would meet all the needs of the case, there would be nothing to complain of; money—to the shame of malevolent agitators be it recollected—is always forthcoming for schemes of mercy and charity once fairly brought under the notice of those who have money to give. But something more is wanted, both to meet the need of the poor, and to satisfy the moral sense of the rich. And the proof that the latter are aware of this may be found in the interest which, as a class, they show in all schemes and suggestions affecting the welfare of their less fortunate countrymen. The study of political economy is becoming every year more and more a necessary part of a liberal education, and economic science is ever more and more directed towards the amelioration of the condition of the masses. The individual man of property and station may perhaps be selfish or stolid enough to regard such a topic with distaste or indifference; but he does not venture to parade those feelings even before his fellows. There is not—there never can be again—indifference among the earnest or thoughtful of the well-provided classes to the sufferings, the struggles, and the prospects of the poor. That contempt for their wishes, that recklessness of their interests, which was frequent and perhaps fashionable fifty years ago, would now be scouted as indecorous, if not immoral. The wealth of the wealthy, the study of the wise, the influence of the powerful, are in an ever-increasing degree at the command of those who can show how they may be used to elevate and improve the great body of the labouring population. "The condition of the lower classes" is, in one shape or another, the permanent and paramount question of

Digitized by Google

the day among the higher. All the resources of science, benevolence, and energy are brought to bear upon it; and if it be a question that can be solved by human skill and human industry, we have every reason to hope for a progressive improvement up to whatever limits may be imposed on our progress by the laws of nature,—limits of which as yet we know nothing, except that they are so far beyond our present cognisance that we need in no way trouble ourselves about their existence.

But, whatever may be our hopes for times to come, it is beyond question that the amount of social evil and human misery now existing is enough, if once we fairly realise its sum and meaning, to appal the most apathetic, and to dishearten the most hopeful. Perhaps it is as well that very few of us can fully realise it to ourselves, that the stupendous figures which exhibit it convey to our minds no idea at all commensurate with the facts. We may read of so many hundred thousand paupers; we may be told, and may be convinced, that there exist among us scores of thousands who live in crime, and live by crime; we may be astounded by statistics showing how great a fraction of the population of every large city live in squalid and pestilential cellars, in filthy and sickening courts; how many again literally have not where to lay their head, if it be not in some dark passage or under some vacant railway-arch: but we do not fully conceive—few of us even attempt to conceive—what a mass of human wretchedness, suffering, and degradation these figures represent. If we have any adequate idea of the misery of any one of these unhappy creatures, our imagination fails us in the endeavour to multiply that misery by the terrible totals before us. We may read with deep and thrilling interest such books as Mayhew's *Paved with Gold*, or Miss Caddell's *Home and the Homeless;* we may be thoroughly convinced of the truthfulness of the frightful pictures which they draw; but we seldom understand completely how large a portion of our countrymen live the life therein represented. The quantity of deep, dark, and hopeless wretchedness which infests our great towns is almost incalculable; and those who have once caught a glimpse of its extent, may be excused if they fall back into listless despair, or call for remedies on a scale as gigantic as the evil. There is enough in the horrors which a few days of study may reveal to plead for the pardon of men who seem to lose their sense and judgment in face of the revelation. The mass of misery existing is so enormous, and is withal crowded into so small a space, that it may well seem too great for the agency of those remedies which Nature always and incessantly applies

Digitized by Google

to all diseases, social and moral as well as physical. We may be impatient of the nonsense which many enthusiastic reformers utter, and may clearly apprehend the futility of their proposals, the injustice or the absurdity of their schemes; but we must not forget that, as one of the wildest and most violent among them declares, "much learning has made them mad;" that their extravagance is the natural impulse of a warm heart and honest purpose, uncontrolled either by clearness of perception or soundness of judgment. We have a right to expose their errors, inconsistency, and ignorance; we are bound to resist their plans, and to condemn the headlong haste with which they rush to conclusions on a subject of which they understand little or nothing; we must meet with severe reprobation their virulent denunciations of all who are cooler or wiser than themselves, their impatient rejection of the guidance of science, their culpable disregard of principle and detestation of prudence: but we cannot deny the excellence of their ultimate purpose, while we indicate the utter inadequacy of the means by which they would attain it, or the inevitable ruin which their schemes would entail upon society.

There are two classes of those who are striving to render themselves on a large scale social benefactors, whether by theoretic teaching or by practical experiment. First, there are those who properly deserve the title of Social Reformers, whose hopes are limited to improving society without aspiring to reconstruct it; who endeavour to ameliorate its condition and further its advancement according to the mode of development which hitherto, in every age and country, has been all but invariably adopted. Secondly, there is a class whom Mr. Sargant has aptly designated Social Innovators, who despair of any extensive improvement so long as the fundamental principles of social organisation remain what they now are; and who propose to create society, if not human nature, anew, upon an entirely different basis. The first, following nature, endeavour to make the most of the resources already provided, and the direction already given to human progress; the other party set aside all considerations of this kind, and desire to construct human communities according to some artificial scheme, from which they believe that all good may be evolved and all evil eliminated. Of the latter class are the St. Simons, Fouriers, and Proudhons; the Socialists and Communists of all ages and descriptions; Owen and Louis Blanc; perhaps, if we may judge by somewhat shadowy indications, the author of *Alton Locke;* and certainly the founders of the Rappite and Shaker communities. To the class of Reformers belong those who have done the work and led the thoughts of their genera-

Digitized by Google

tion—the promoters of the Anti-Slavery Society and the Anti-Corn-Law League; the founders of our reformatories and ragged schools, our refuges for the destitute and our penitentiaries for the fallen. Men of this class are not rare, we hope, in any country; in England their numbers are considerable, and we trust on the increase. The others have had their day with us; their strength was broken by the failures of Mr. Owen; but their school is still numerous in France, and finds a sort of toleration, though not favour, even from so high an authority as Mr. John Stuart Mill. The volume by Mr. Sargant, which stands at the head of this article, gives an interesting but often very inaccurate notice of some of the wildest schemes which have found favour with the theorists of France; and which are, perhaps, still worth the attention of the students of social science in this country, as containing, in the midst of a farrago of ignorance and absurdity, some germs and fragments of truth which merit preservation.

It is our object in the present paper to indicate briefly, first, the most important of those radical errors into which the socialist theorists fall, and those scientific certainties against which they blindly and vainly struggle; and next, the principle of some few of those experiments made by sober social *reformers*, which may compass, to a certain moderate extent, the same ends as those which stimulate the socialist theorists to their fruitless efforts, but which would attain them by the modest and gradual means alone likely to lead to any durable amelioration of present evils.

The first and most universal characteristic of the social innovator is a profound ignorance, and often a violent abhorrence, of political economy. Very generally he only knows enough of it to misstate a few of its leading propositions; sometimes he has studied and failed to understand it; most often he merely conceives of it as something which reasons where he can but declaim, which pauses where he is impatient to act, which perceives a necessity where he imagines tyranny, which presages danger where he sees only hope and promise. The ignorance which he generally displays of every thing which it is most essential that he should know would be often ridiculous, but for the mischiefs which are apt to ensue from the declamations of uninstructed enthusiasm on such perilous topics. Almost every one of the socialist writers is absolutely unable to comprehend the simplest law affecting the recompense of labour—that of demand and supply; hardly one of them is aware that competition can never force down wages below their natural level, because the competition of capital for employment is as keen as that of labour. Hardly one of them

Digitized by Google

recognises the fact that no arrangements can permanently keep the price of labour above the level at which competition fixes it, because a higher price would diminish the profits of capital below the rate which, in a given age and country, is necessary to promote accumulation. Nay, some of them actually denounce accumulation as an evil, and appear to think capital itself a superfluity; because they regard the savings of the capitalist as something taken from the remuneration of labour, not as something taken from the personal expenditure of the rich to give increased employment to the poor; because they regard the employer's profits as a deduction from the earnings of the employed, forgetting the enormous increase of value which their labour derives from the assistance of his capital. It would be a tedious task to accumulate instances of ignorance and misconception of this and similar kinds; but a few may be worth quotation, as a specimen of the capacity of these renovators of society for the arduous task they are eager to undertake. One writer, who has given a very readable account of "social systems founded on the principle of coöperation," maintains the exploded theory of over-production—that there can possibly be a general over-supply of all commodities in all the markets of the world—if not more wealth than mankind can use, yet more than they have means to pay for; just as if each portion of that wealth were not a means of purchase in itself. In another place, showing that in thirty years the price paid for the weaving of a given length of cloth had fallen from sixteen shillings to less than two shillings, he argues thence that the earnings of the operatives have fallen; wholly forgetting that during those thirty years the introduction of new machinery and the perfection of the power-loom had, as he mentions in another place, raised the weaver's rate of production from two to twenty pieces a week; so that, where he would formerly have received 32*s.*, he would now, on the showing of this writer, receive 40*s.* a-week. We believe the earnings to be exaggerated in both cases; but the proportion is probably correct enough.

Mr. Owen appears to have remained during all his life unaware of the simple truth that demand for commodities is not demand for labour; that the wages of labour depend on the amount of capital employed in industrial enterprise, not on the markets open for the produce of industry; and actually believed that ample employment might be secured to every one, if only a standard of value were adopted not liable to be, like gold, restricted in quantity by any difficulties of production. Perhaps it is hardly fair to treat a writer so vague, confused, and incapable of clear conceptions or intelligible statement, as a representative of any order of thinkers. But a similar excuse

Digitized by Google

can hardly be made when we find a clergyman of the Church of England, a man of high ability, of liberal education, and of noble aims, putting into his works, without any indication of dissent, such passages as the following.* No doubt we may rather attribute it to the artistic desire to represent vividly the feelings of the ignorant Socialist, than to any thing like full sympathy with the drift of arguments so completely worthless. Yet knowing as we do from the close of the same book that Mr. Kingsley so far sympathises with his socialist tailor as to believe that it needs a fundamental reconstruction of our economical system to renovate English society, it may be inferred that he does not by any means adequately appreciate the absurdities involved in the socialist argument we are about to cite.

"'We sent up a memorial to Government about the army and police clothing system: we told them how it was the lowest, most tyrannous, most ill-paid of all the branches of slop-making; how men took to it only when they were starved out of every thing else. We entreated them to have mercy on us—entreated them to interfere between the merciless contractors and the poor wretches on whose flesh and blood contractors, sweaters, and colonels were all fattening; and there's the answer we got. . . . . Read it! "Sorry to say that it is utterly out of the power of her Majesty's * * * * to interfere, as the question of wages rests entirely between the contractor and the workmen."

'He lies!' I said: '*if it did, the workmen might put a pistol to the contractor's head*, and say, "You shall not tempt the poor, needy, greedy, starving workers to their own destruction, and the destruction of their class; you shall not offer them these murderous, poisonous prices. If we saw you offering our neighbour a glass of laudanum, we would stop you at all risks; and we will stop you now." No, no, John, the question don't lie between workmen and contractor, but between workmen and contractor *plus* grape-and-bayonets.'"

Has Mr. Kingsley ever fairly faced the truth, that if wages are low, it is because capital is not sufficient to supply all who desire employment with work at higher prices, and because those who would otherwise be unemployed *will* prefer "half a loaf to no bread"? Any forcible interference to raise the rate of wages implies the necessity of a larger capital to supply the same quantity of work; and as it tends to lower, and not to raise profits, it attracts no fresh capital into the trade. It results, then, in a diminished quantity of employment at higher wages; that is to say, more workmen absolutely unemployed, and less produce for the public. To increase the rate of wages without increasing capital, is to throw more men out of work; it gives a comfortable maintenance to a few, at the cost of the utter starvation of the rest: for when there is capital enough

* See Mr. Kingsley's *Alton Locke*.

Digitized by Google

to employ all at remunerative wages, those wages will, by the competition of capital, be always secured to the workman; when there is not, every shilling added to the remuneration of one man must be gained by the enforced idleness of another. But this the social innovator cannot understand, simple as the argument may appear. If he did, he would never commit the fatal error of attempting to regulate *ab extra* the bargain between capital and labour. Probably he imagines that the increased earnings of the workman would come from the diminished profits of the employer; forgetting that (looking at the matter on any large scale) competition always tends to keep down profits to the lowest point which will secure the employment of capital, and that therefore it will not be worth the while of the capitalist to accept a smaller remuneration; that instead of doing so, he will contract his business, diminish the number of his workmen, and yet be able to obtain from the public the same price for a smaller quantity of commodities, because less would not retain capital in the trade. If Mr. Kingsley fully understands these principles,—which we will not deny,—we think it might not have been wasted labour to find some appropriate organ for them in a work of art wherein the opposite or socialist view is set forth with so much fervour and skill.

We have now illustrated sufficiently the *general* want of familiarity with, or want of attention to, political economy and its laws which characterises most of the writers who sympathise more or less with Socialism. The special socialist schemes may all be classed under one or other of a few closely allied species. In every case, there is a great disposition to exaggerate the possible results of the proposed reconstruction, in consequence of an utter oblivion of the distinction between that which is essential and inevitable and that which is incidental and mutable—between social arrangements and economical laws. Those who desire to re-create the former, seem to ignore altogether the limits imposed by the latter. They do not recognise the clearly-drawn line between that province of improvement which is open to them and that vast region of necessity which is utterly out of their reach. And thus they are led to make gorgeous promises which it is at once evident that they can never perform; to aim at the removal of evils which a little practical sense and sober study would have shown to be utterly out of the sphere of their proposed action. It is only one or two among them who have dreamed of the abolition of death,—the greatest and most intangible of necessary evils; but many have, in their ecstatic visions, boasted of future triumphs almost as utterly out of their reach.

We now pass to a brief examination of socialist methods of

Digitized by Google

procedure, classified according to the scientific principles they violate. The whole of that part of economical science which treats of the *production* of wealth is equally applicable to any and every state of society; its laws are simple, clear, and absolute, and it is easy to test by them the effect of any social changes upon the aggregate wealth of a community. To sum up the whole in a few words, the requisites of production, in any state farther advanced than that of the rudest savages, are three—land, capital, and labour. The first is absolutely limited in quantity, and its productive power can only be increased by the application of both the other two elements to that object. In order, then, to obtain any increase in the aggregate production, there must be an increase in the quantity or in the productive power of capital or labour, or both. Any social change which causes such an increase in any way, increases the aggregate produce: though, if it only increase the *quantity* of labour, other things remaining the same, the law "of the diminishing proportionate return from land" diminishes the proportionate productive power of labour, while the quantity of produce *required* increases in proportion not to the productiveness but to the quantity of labour; and thus the community is worse off than before. That land will not yield double produce for double labour is well known; and, on the other hand, it is certain that a double number of labourers require a double produce; and it is thus clear that a mere increase in the quantity of labour, though tending to increase the aggregate wealth of society, diminishes that proportion of wealth to numbers which measures social prosperity. Therefore, any social arrangements which are to benefit society by increasing production must increase either the amount of capital, or the productive power of capital or labour, or both. It is not easy to perceive how any of the many schemes of the innovators would have such an effect.

But that part of their promises on which the Socialists dwell with most enthusiasm has reference to the second great branch of political economy—the distribution of wealth. Under the existing system, this is left to regulate itself by the law of nature, according to the conflicting interests of men; the law of society only interfering to see that no violence or fraud is allowed on either side, but for the rest considering men the best judges and guardians of their own concerns. This is the system of unrestricted competition, as carried out in England; the principle being so strong in itself as to be paramount everywhere, but being nowhere else formally acknowledged. Everywhere else the law interferes more or less frequently to regulate the limits of the conflict of interests—as by protection; or to

Digitized by Google

moderate its intensity—as by laws to regulate prices, interest of capital, or wages of labour. In every case where such interference has occurred, the result has been demonstrably mischievous. Where competition is left to its own operation, its effect is to distribute to each class of contributors to production —to the representatives of land, capital, labour employed in each branch of industry—a share of the produce, in proportion more or less exact to the degree in which society has need of the services of that class and the value which it sets on their productions. And as that value depends solely on the proportion of supply to demand, the effect of free competition is to drive producers of all classes to produce that for which there is demand—that which society wants; thereby effecting rudely and indirectly that "organisation of labour" which Socialism desires to achieve by direct enactment. Also, the proportion between the three elements of production which is necessary to the progress of society at each particular time or place is thus obtained. If land be in superabundance, capital and labour divide nearly the whole produce, and their rapid increase is thus encouraged; if capital be scarce, accumulation is encouraged by a high rate of profits; if population be over-crowded, a low rate of wages checks its increase till capital has time to outstrip it. At any period the proportionate remuneration of each of the elements of production marks the comparative desirability of its increase, and at the same time tends to cause that ratio of increase which it proves to be desirable. Socialism desires to do away with this law of distribution, and to substitute for it one based on arbitrary and fixed arrangements. It would secure the necessary balance of different kinds of produce by a direct mandate of the social rulers; but how it would effect the proper balance between the three elements of production generally, no one has yet told us. Economists know that such a balance must be found, but cannot divine how Socialism would provide it; Socialists, ignorant of the necessity, are careless how to meet it.

The Socialists generally desire, in the distribution of wealth, to regard individuals and not classes. Their rules of division are based, not on considerations of natural law or human prudence, but on the high ground of moral principle and abstract justice. They have devised various modes of distribution, all defended by reference to the same standard; of which the only one at all tenable or self-consistent is that enounced by Louis Blanc—one of the most clear-headed, honest, and impracticable among them: "FROM *each according to his capacity;* TO *each according to his needs.*"

This dictum of Louis Blanc embodies the essence of Com-

Digitized by Google

munism in its most perfect form, that form in which it appears as a demand for the absolute abolition of individual rights and property; in which society is presented as the sole owner of the land, capital, and labour of the community, treating its individual members as children of one family are treated by its head, each doing what he can, and each receiving what he needs. Similar to this are the schemes of Mr. Owen, M. Cabet, and others; while St. Simon, Fourier, and others,—who, with less logical sense, but more practical judgment, propose an unequal division of earnings according to certain rules,—are classed by Mr. Mill as Socialists but not Communists, the latter term being restricted to the school of which Louis Blanc is the ablest disciple. The Communist is eager to construct society upon principles of abstract justice, as he conceives them, with little regard to the immediate practical effect of such an arrangement. His idea seems to be, that every man has a right to be happy in proportion to his moral worth, and that his happiness consists in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Accordingly he would give as large a share to the man who achieves little work as to the man who performs much, assuming that each works according to his strength, and arguing that the strong man deserves no reward for being strong, and that the weak man ought not to suffer for his weakness. It would be a mere waste of time to meet him on his chosen ground with the argument that every man has a right to the fruits of his labour; that in entering on social life he parts with a portion of those fruits for the assistance of capital and the protection of the law; but that you have no right to make the strong man pay more for those blessings than the weak, which is certainly done when you give to each the same wages for different amounts of work. On the ground of abstract principle, which is too uncertain to afford a sure footing to any party, the communist is on pretty equal terms with the economist; when he descends to practical matters, which he is sooner or later compelled to do, he shows clearly enough his ignorance of the difficulties to be met, and the means requisite for meeting them. He begins by affirming, if the question be put, that the productive power of capital and labour will be increased by a system in which no man has a strong individual interest in being either thrifty or industrious; but if you press for the secret by which this increased productiveness is to be effected, nothing is to be had beyond vague declamation or tedious repetition of certain invariable formulæ. It is quite clear that, under a communistic system, the labourer loses every stimulus to exertion which at present exists; and it is not very obvious what substitute is provided. Mr. John Stuart Mill, the only man of economical

Digitized by Google

knowledge and sound judgment who has any thing to say in favour of Communism, and whose approval of its theories is hesitating and limited in the extreme, while admitting the full force of this objection, replies with considerable truth, though not altogether without exaggeration, by pointing to the very large proportion of labour which is at present performed by those who have no very strong personal interest in its results. There is undoubtedly very much reason and sense in the following passage, which states the case against the existing system far more forcibly than any Communist ever yet has done:

"But how small a part of all the labour performed in England, from the lowest paid to the highest, is done by persons working for their own benefit! From the Irish reaper or hodman to the chief-justice or the minister of state, nearly all the work of society is remunerated by day-wages or fixed salaries. A factory operative has less personal interest in his work than a member of a communist association, since he is not, like him, working for a partnership of which he is himself a member. It will no doubt be objected, that although the labourers themselves have not, in most cases, a personal interest in their work, they are watched and superintended, and their labour directed, and the mental part of the labour performed, by persons who have. Even this, however, is far from being universally the fact. In all public, and many of the largest and most successful private undertakings, not only the labours of detail, but the control and superintendence, are intrusted to salaried officers. And though the 'master's eye,' when the master is vigilant and intelligent, is of proverbial value, it must be remembered that in a socialist farm or manufactory each labourer would be under the eye, not of one master, but of the whole community."

There is truth in all this; but, though loth to differ from so profound and scientific a thinker as Mr. Mill, we think there is also a good deal of exaggeration. In the first place, wherever it is possible, as in the case of "the factory operative," work is paid by the piece, and the workman has as strong a personal interest in it as his master. Again, diligence is at present stimulated, especially in the case of skilled labour, by the desire to rise; which ceases to exist in a state where all are on a level, and where ambition consequently finds no place, and can exercise no influence. Nor can we believe that the "eye of the whole community" would ever be so vigilant, or its influence so efficacious, as the eye of the master whose every interest is at stake, and whose whole mind is given to the success of his business. It is to be remembered, moreover, that the present arrangements of industry are by none affirmed to be what they ought to be; that all employers of labour feel very strongly the desirability of giving every person whose

Digitized by Google

duties are more than mechanical a direct personal interest in their efficient performance; and that in due time this will certainly be done to an extent which will not only increase very greatly the productive power of capital and labour, but will achieve almost as great a union of interests, and quite as great an energy on the part of the workman, as Communism can ever hope to effect. The progress of the competitive, or natural, system of society will, in the gradual spread of experience and enlightenment, increase the productiveness of industry by motives far stronger—human nature being what it is—than any to which the most earnest and honest of Communists can appeal.

One only among them seems to have been dimly aware of this. The fundamental doctrine of Mr. Owen's teaching was the possibility and necessity of reconstituting humanity on socialistic principles. His creed involved two principles, each of them wrong, but both absolutely essential to the success of Communism as a scheme of general society. Firstly, man is the creature of circumstances; secondly, circumstances can be arranged by the will of man in any way that he will, so as to produce any desired effect on his fellow-man. From the first, it followed that men are just what they are made; from the second, that it is possible to make them any thing that we please. A belief in this creed was wisely made the essential condition of admittance into the socialist paradise where its truth was to be tested. Unhappily the dogma was falsified by the results of experiment; Mr. Owen failed in adjusting circumstances; circumstances did not prove absolute in their influence over the characters of men; circumstances could not be adjusted as he pleased; and ruinous failure was the consequence.

Tried on a small scale, under wise leadership, and with some stringent control, either religious or personal, to secure subordination, prudence, and industry, communistic experiments have sometimes had a temporary success. Superstition, frugality, and celibacy proved the foundation of a very flourishing colony of "Shakers" in America; ignorance and despotic authority secured for a while the success of Mr. Rapp's community at Economy, in Ohio; and one or two other institutions of a similar character have been successful whilst under the immediate personal direction of men whose acknowledged superiority commanded implicit obedience from their followers. But this element of absolutism seems necessary in every case; no popular government would possess the decision and authority requisite, where every detail of life must be directed by statute; where the daily food and daily labour of each member

Digitized by Google

of the society have to be allotted to him by the ruling power; and where the distribution of tasks must be arbitrary, even if the produce be divided according to a fixed rule generally recognised as just. On a large scale, we cannot conceive the success of such an experiment to be possible.

St. Simon and Fourier—contemporaries belonging to the end of the last and the beginning of the present century—propounded social schemes not widely different from each other,—both abolishing the competitive principle, and reconstructing the world after their own fancy, but each recognising the law of unequal distribution as essentially just and natural. Fourier, whose work is far more elaborate than St. Simon's, descended into every detail of his scheme; building in the air, not castles, but gigantic colleges of industry, in which all the members of each small community were to dwell in association and harmony, and the rules, plan, and arrangement of which he laid down with astonishing minuteness. He saw the practical necessity of providing due remuneration for capital, in order to give him a chance of carrying out his scheme; he appreciated also the indispensability of skill and talent, and the necessity of rewarding them. But his plan for doing so is as absurd as any of the communistic schemes. He divides the produce into fixed shares; allotting one-third to capital, one-fourth to talent, and five-twelfths to labour. It is hardly requisite to remark how absurd is the allotment of a fixed share to capital, whether fixed or floating; whether it be or be not necessary annually to replace it. In the first case, that of floating capital, annually turned over, this share of one-third would seldom or never replace all that was expended. To imagine that it would, is to suppose that the total produce would be at least three times as great as the capital employed. In the case of fixed capital, which need not be annually replaced, the profit would be enormous. Suppose the produce to be twice as great as the capital, the owners of the floating capital would lose one-third of their property annually; the owners of fixed capital—as machinery, buildings, &c.—would receive something like 66 per cent. In regard to the share assigned to talent, it is simply impossible to conceive how it would be apportioned. The labourer would probably find himself worse off than before; the produce no greater, and his share of it even in many cases smaller than at present. On the rest of Fourier's scheme—its wonderful details as to the daily life of his disciples that were to be, the arrangement of the *phalanstères*, the changes of occupation once in every two hours, the assignments of tasks to different groups of labourers—it is not necessary to dwell: they involve blunders quite worthy of his fundamental

Digitized by Google

arrangement for the distribution of the common earnings, and show as little capacity for practical management as knowledge of economical principles.

Only one of the apostles of Socialism ever had a chance of trying his scheme on a large scale, namely, M. Louis Blanc. When the French Revolution of 1848 had placed him in the Provisional Government, his first demand was for a recognition of the right of every man to live by work, and his next for a public provision for the organisation of labour — the necessary result of the first concession. Backed, as his own narrative admits, by the threats of a mob which he did not attempt to restrain, and by the weakness of his colleagues, he partially succeeded, and was installed at the head of a Commission of Inquiry and Arbitration at the Luxembourg. Here, though without funds and without ostensible force, he succeeded in doing no little mischief; interfering to adjust the wages of labour at a rate higher than usual, during a time when trade was fearfully depressed and panic almost universal; and extorting from the employers, in that time of peril, acquiescence which it would hardly have been safe to refuse. He meant well, beyond a doubt; he believed that the capitalist had no right to the fruits of his abstinence—his profits; and that the labourer had a right to these, as well as to the fruits of his labour—his wages; and consequently he cared little how far he diminished the former for the sake of increasing the latter. Still worse in point of injustice and obliquity of moral vision was the demand which he made, that the State should assist with capital and custom certain associations which he established — his coöperative tailors at Clichy and other co-operative societies elsewhere. M. Louis Blanc is a very earnest, able, and honest man; but, like all Socialists, he sees nothing but his own great object; and, like most Frenchmen, his ideas of political morality and public justice are in lamentable confusion. The French republicans were to the last unable or unwilling to acknowledge the right of the nation to reject the Republic; they connived throughout at the pretensions of Paris to dictate to the whole of France, because they shared the convictions of the Parisians. No Englishman ever thinks of resisting the national will because it has pronounced against his cherished political faith; even the extreme republicans of Italy declare themselves ready to acquiesce in any form of government which Italy shall freely choose for herself. But even the more moderate of the French revolutionists were eager to force their theories on a reluctant people; so Louis Blanc, honestly convinced that his views were wise, just, and salutary, could not see that he had no right to carry them out at the

Digitized by Google

public expense. He could not see that the government has no right to favour one class or party at the expense of others; that it has no right to spend the public money for private purposes; that it has no right to award the public custom to any but those who will do the public work best at the smallest cost. The Provisional Government gave public employment to the coöperative societies, at the demand of their ardent colleague. The National Assembly did worse: they lent millions of francs from the treasury to these associations; took the money raised by taxation from the private capitalist, large or small, and gave it to his new rivals. This Louis Blanc calls tardy and reluctant justice; to us it seems to resemble the justice of the highwayman, who gave to the poor while he plundered the rich, but whose charity did not save him from the penalty of his thefts. The State has no right to interfere with the course of trade for the purpose of injuring one class and aiding another; and so flagrant an instance of unfair dealing as that complacently justified by M. Louis Blanc deserves our severest censure on the grounds of political justice as well as of public expediency.*

There is not the least reason why coöperative societies of working men should not be formed, if the means exist to form them, on any terms which the coöperators like to establish. Their schemes may be wise and promising, or they may be wrong and impracticable; that is their own affair. No one has a right to hinder or hamper them. They have a right to do what they will with their own; and the State ought to see that they have fair play in so doing—ought to secure them against legal quibbles and difficulties which may impede their course, and to let them "start fair" in the race. Their success or failure concerns themselves alone, and should be left to their own skill and foresight; Government may not interfere either to forbid or to foster them. That disappointment and failure will, as a general rule, attend all really communistic experiments, is tolerably certain, because the experimenters expect far more than they can possibly realise. Their promises we have described already; we have shown how much there is which they cannot do: let us consider what really lies within

* Louis Blanc has vindicated his political character from all connection with the *ateliers nationaux*, organised to feed, rather than to employ, the discontented artisans of Paris. He had nothing to do with that very foolish and mischievous organisation. Englishmen are so apt to do injustice to men of his stamp, that it is necessary, in condemning their schemes, to explain clearly what were their actual views, and what the errors they involved. Those of the Luxembourg Commission were very great; but hardly worse than those of many would-be economical writers of our own country, who are far enough from Socialism or Republicanism.

Digitized by Google

their reach, on the most favourable supposition. They cannot, as we have shown, hope to increase the total amount of produce in proportion to the number of the labourers; they must even run the risk of sacrificing something in their productive power to their principle of equal distribution. Men will always work hardest who work only for themselves and those who belong to them; and the energy of communist labour will be always less than that of piece-work, and will decrease with the increasing size of the community, which will reduce more and more the individual interest of each in his own work. But inequality of fortune, which exists at present in so disastrous a degree, would be abolished; there would be no very rich, and, at first, no very poor; there need be no sudden and distressing fluctuations of trade, or if there were, they would not bring a whole class of workmen into danger of starvation; and there need not be that waste both in production and distribution,—the waste of capital and labour in producing what is not wanted, and in an uneconomical system of distribution,—which now exists, if the "organisation of labour" could ever be realised. How far absolute equality of fortune would be an unmixed blessing, how far gradation of ranks and possessions is an unmitigated evil, is far more doubtful than the communist imagines. But one thing is certain—that only by extreme frugality, or by an unlimited command of land, would it be possible to preserve the balance between wealth and numbers in a society where self-interest kept no check on population. In an old and thickly-peopled country, a generation or two of Communism, with its removal of all prudential restraints, would reduce equality of fortune to a mere *égalité de misère*.

Nor is it conceivable how, in a communistic society of large extent, the division of tasks, the determination of the relative quantities of different articles which ought to be produced, and of the amount of capital and labour to be devoted to each branch of industry, is to be practically accomplished. How is this stupendous organisation of labour, so glibly boasted of, to be carried into effect? who can be intrusted with a duty so tremendous? who can judge how many shoes, how many coats, how many bushels of wheat a nation will need to consume or can afford to produce? who shall decide, when retrenchment is necessary, what article shall be dispensed with? who shall determine, when there is a surplus of labour and capital, to what purpose their energies shall be devoted? The idea of a Board of Control charged, as an important department of government, with all these affairs, is one truly appalling. First, the tyrannic nature of its powers is enough to revolt us; secondly, its functions would soon multiply beyond any human capability

Digitized by Google

of fulfilment. Statesmanship would break down and genius sink into imbecility before the monstrous task assigned to them. In a very small community such a board might exist, and might do its work; on a great scale, whether as between man and man, or between association and association, the balance between production and consumption must be left to the regulation of the natural principles of competition and conflict of interests.

It may be fairly considered, then, that a communistic experiment on a large scale cannot be tried; and that on a small scale its success is improbable, its perils great, and its best results such as might be better and more easily attained under the present system. This is true of all schemes of associated labour which, dividing profits by arbitrary and invariable rules, without regard to practical experience or to the actual constitution of human nature, neglect to appeal to those motives which most strongly stimulate thrift and energise industry. But there is of course nothing in the principle of association necessarily involving these seeds of inevitable failure. Co-operative stores, coöperative societies of any kind, violating no law of political economy, neglecting no consideration of prudence and policy, may succeed and have succeeded. Most heartily do we rejoice in their success; most highly do we think of their possible utility. No social phenomenon of late years has given us greater satisfaction, as a proof of what the working classes may do for themselves, than the great prosperity which has been deserved and enjoyed by the coöperative societies of Rochdale. From the smallest beginnings they have raised themselves to the rank of a considerable commercial undertaking; and the history which Mr. Holyoake has recently published of their struggles and their successes, though less concise, clear, and explanatory than it might have been made, has for us far more interest than narratives of financial undertakings, however grand and important, can often possess. The tale of the "Lilliputian capitalists," with their subscriptions of threepence a-week, and their hardly collected fund of 28*l.* wherewith to commence business; of their hard and resolute fight with difficulties and discouragements; of the dangers and embarrassment through which their vessel was safely steered; of the high position and consequence which they have now attained,—is a tale of cheering promise to all who are anxious for the welfare of the masses, and who know that their welfare depends on what is done *by* them, not on what can be done *for* them. The Rochdale Coöperative Store is an achievement of which not only its authors, but the working class generally, have reason

Digitized by Google

to be proud. It has succeeded where not only Louis Blanc and Fourier, but where most of the coöperative societies set on foot by Messrs. Maurice and Kingsley, have signally failed. From first to last it has owed its foundation, its preservation, its character and its triumphs to the wisdom, self-denial, and resolution of working men. Almost its every member, from the poorest purchaser to the chairman of the Board of Directors, belongs, or at its commencement did belong, to the class that lives by the labour of its hands. It is a noble monument of the perseverance, wisdom, and energy which are possessed by some members of that class, and which would, had they been general, have saved them from the evils for which Socialism is offered as the only cure.

In 1844, the Society of Equitable Pioneers commenced operations in a small room in a back street of Rochdale, with a stock worth somewhat less than 15*l.*, and with only forty members. The capital is now about 16,000*l.*; its annual profits not much less than 6,000*l.*; its members more than eighteen hundred in number. The store was originally open only two or three evenings, and its business was transacted gratuitously by the directors. Now its numerous warehouses are open as long as other establishments, crowded with customers, and attended by a sufficient staff of salaried officers. It has a library and a reading-room, on which it spends yearly more than 100*l.* As it never gives credit or takes it, it can lose nothing by bad debts, and has no complicated liabilities to encumber its accounts; which are therefore simple enough to be intelligible to all its members, and clear enough to command the confidence of a class which generally oscillates between credulity and suspicion. Great is the material improvement which it has effected in the condition of its subscribers. They are provided with unadulterated food and drink, always of good quality, at fair prices. They have a savings bank, which pays them five per cent interest; and a shop, in whose profits they share without trouble and with little risk. Many of them who in former days had not, and never expected to have, a sovereign in hand that was not pledged beforehand to redeem long-standing debts, have now 50*l.*, 100*l.*, or even more, to their credit in the books of the society, which they can draw on giving a few weeks' notice. As great is their improvement in independence of feeling and in moral elevation. They have received the best practical education that any large number of English working men ever enjoyed. They have learned courtesy, forbearance, patience; they have gained practical insight into many of the most essential principles of social science; they have been taught to judge men and things

Digitized by Google

far more wisely than their class generally do; have been instructed by experience to "accuse no man falsely, and be content with their wages." Above all, they have learned the dignity of self-reliance; the pride of being out of debt. There can be no more valuable lesson than these to the working man: till he has learnt these, he has no chance of rising either in material comforts or in social position; with these, his own talents, energy, and thrift may enable him to reach a far higher station than that in which he was born, and will at all events secure education for his children and independence for his age.

The Rochdale Store, considering itself as a purchasing agency for its members, divides its profits not in proportion to the capital paid in, but to the purchases made. This may at first sight seem strange; but at least there are plausible reasons in its favour. The purchasers are the proprietors; the store purchases on their account; and therefore considers the profits as belonging to them just as much as would be the case could they themselves make their purchases by wholesale, as it does for them. In regard to retail trade, this plan of distribution by coöperative agency, instead of by individual tradesmen, has advantages which coöperation does not enjoy in any other business. In ordinary retail dealing, there is excessive waste,—waste by employing three or four shops and shopkeepers to do the work of one, while each must make on a small capital a profit sufficient for his maintenance. Thus, if we take the income required by a small shopkeeper at some 50*l.* a year, and suppose his capital to be 200*l.*, it is manifest that he must make a profit at the rate of twenty-five per cent; while a larger capitalist would think ten or fifteen a very ample return. The eighteen hundred customers of the Rochdale Store would probably be divided among some twenty shops in different trades, each having but a small capital, inadequately employed, and being therefore obliged to exact an exorbitant profit on each transaction; by association they can manage the business at less cost, and divide the profits among themselves: nor does their so doing violate any principle of political economy, or contradict any conclusion which might have been fairly drawn from practical experience and knowledge.

There is a corn-mill attached to the store, which is managed on the same principle. It is an agency for the purchase of corn and the distribution of flour, established for the benefit, principally, of a number of small coöperative stores established in the district. The greater part of the capital is owned by the "Pioneers," the title assumed by the society

Digitized by Google

which has established the store. But the profits, after interest has been paid on the capital invested, are divided, like those of the retail department, among the purchasers who are members, in proportion to their purchases; apparently on the ground we have stated, that they are the proprietors of the mill, which is not a private shop, but an agency under their control. The same law applies to all the departments properly belonging to the Pioneers' Society, and is the fundamental principle of all their arrangements.

The Coöperative Manufacturing Society is managed on a different principle. Here the business is not distribution, but production; and the profits are very properly divided among the producers. Interest at the rate of five per cent is paid on capital; wages are paid to the workpeople at the market rate; and the returns over these amounts, which form the profits of the business, are distributed as follows: the capital and the wages are added together, and the share of each man is according to the proportion of the sum so formed which he possesses. Thus, if the net profits amount to two per cent on this amount, the man who holds 50*l.* of capital invested in the concern, and the man who receives 50*l.* annually in wages, will each receive 1*l.* as his share of the profits. This plan of distribution differs considerably from that ordinarily existing in the forms of partnership between capital and labour to which we are accustomed. But it does not follow that any economical rule is violated thereby. It is clear that labour is likely to be more energetic and efficient than when remunerated by fixed wages; and it is quite possible that its increased efficiency may render the share of the capitalist as large as it would be if he received all the profits, while the workmen had a less direct interest in the fruits of their industry. In the experiments which have been tried of giving workmen a share of the profits in addition to their wages, this has, we believe, been actually the case, more especially in small concerns. Certainly the Rochdale Manufacturing Society finds little difficulty in procuring capital; and though but of recent origin and limited extent, is already in a fair way towards eminent success.

The moral effect of these efforts has been great and encouraging; the temper, skill, patience, and perseverance necessary to conduct them, though not common qualities in the working class, have been largely cultivated among the members of these societies; the system of cash dealings has raised them from the degradation of perpetual indebtedness to a position very far above that of the majority of the class to which they belong. Smaller institutions on a similar principle are gradually rising in the neighbouring districts; and though none of them

Digitized by Google

are likely to rival the coöperators of Rochdale in energy, wisdom, or success, they may afford a most important species of self-education, a valuable lesson of thrift and industry, to all connected with them.

But the success of the "Pioneers" is one rare and striking example of success among many disastrous failures. The talents and virtues to which they owe their present position are not easily to be found among working men. The operative classes of even the most favourably situated and most advanced of the manufacturing districts, who are the *élite* of our labouring population, are generally incapable of the mutual forbearance, loyalty, confidence, and resolution necessary to carry such a scheme into successful execution. They very frequently want steadiness of purpose, self-reliance, and patience; they have very seldom trust in one another, or faith in a principle. For the conduct of a coöperative association are required precisely those qualities in which they are most commonly deficient. The directors of such an undertaking must possess temper to bear with the unreasonable, dignity to hold in check the factious, courage to resist a panic, judgment to restrain the over-sanguine propositions excited by prosperity; and the operatives are too often lamentably wanting in judgment, civil courage, dignity, and command of temper. The leaders must enjoy, as well as deserve, the trust of their associates; the latter must be patient under hardships, just under defeat, temperate in criticism, cordial in support. The operative class are, as a rule, jealous, suspicious, and impatient; prone to the harshest censure of all who fail, immoderate in their reprobation of any step which they cannot fully understand, and grudging in their support of leaders who neither cajole them by flattery nor command them by oratorical power or high personal authority. These are reasons sufficient to account for the almost universal failure of the coöperative societies; their success at Rochdale is less easy to explain to those who have not learned by personal intercourse to appreciate the rare qualifications of those to whom that success is mainly owing.

There is, however, another form in which the system of co-operation might be beneficially applied, and in which it would be far less liable to the embarrassing difficulties which arise from the bad education and defective character of those whom it is intended to benefit. The essential principle involved in that system, as applied at Rochdale and elsewhere, is simply the distribution of the profits among all who assist to create them. This does not necessarily imply any particular rule of distribution, or any special mode of directing the business. It is as applicable to the concerns of a private firm of capitalists as to

Digitized by Google

those of a joint-stock company of workmen. There is no reason why the labourer should not, in addition to the fixed wages which are a necessary condition of his existence, receive also a share of the net profits of the business which should give him an immediate interest in its success. How far this could be done, when and where it should be done, are questions which practical experience only can decide. Where the labouring body is floating, irregularly employed, constantly coming and going, such a plan would be inapplicable; where the work is merely mechanical, or nearly so, it might not be advisable; where the concern is very large or very complicated, the inconveniences would probably far outweigh its advantages. It is in the case of skilled labour and small concerns that its adoption appears to us most easy and most desirable. In such trades as those of builders, masons, carpenters, painters, and the like, where the workmen are superior to the average of their class, and where the master is not too far raised above them to understand their feelings, wishes, and prejudices, such a partnership as would give every workman a strong personal interest in his work, without giving him any power of control over the administration of the business —a partnership *en commandite*, as the French call it—would have a fair prospect of success. Louis Blanc and Mr. Sargant give us an instance of this kind where a Parisian painter, having first secured the best men in the trade by paying them the highest rate of wages, afterwards found it answer to give them *in addition* a share in his profits proportioned to their earnings. So great was the additional energy and care thus inspired, that the employer found his annual gains actually greater than before. Men employed on such terms will of course keep clear of Trades' Unions, and will have nothing to do with strikes. They are pretty sure to be the most sober, diligent, and reliable of workmen; and we may well believe that the success of the experiment would be such as amply to repay the additional expense. With the chief clerks, managers, and foremen in large concerns this is very generally done; and there seems to be no reason why the practice should not be very much more widely extended. It would be too adventurous to hazard a prophecy that this will be the eventual form of the relations between capitalist and labourer; but if it should be so, it will be almost as much preferable to the present state of those relations as to the arrangement proposed by the advocates of Communism.

But no such moderate change as this—no gradual improvement in the condition of the working classes—no slow process of *rapprochement* between them and the higher orders of society —will satisfy the demands of those who consider the fundamental principles of our social fabric to be wrong and rotten;

Digitized by Google

who regard property as robbery, inequality as injustice, and who desire to see the practical constitution of the world remodelled according to certain theories of abstract morality. It is of no avail to point out to them that the tendency of social progress is slowly but surely to lessen all differences in station and fortune—to narrow the gulf between the rich and the poor, and smooth the ascent from one grade to another for all whom nature has fitted to rise: so long as the wise man shall be the richer for his wisdom, or the strong man for his strength; so long as distinction of capacity, of merit, of energy, shall create distinctions of rank and wealth,—there will always be discontent among those who are kept by accident or defect in the lowest position, and that discontent will always find expression. Above all, so long as hereditary fortunes exist; so long as thrift and industry and talent are allowed to bequeath their earnings to those nearest and dearest to them,—so long will those whose ancestors have laboured less successfully or lived less frugally be envious of their more fortunate neighbours—so long will the *fruges consumere nati* be the objects of sarcasm, denunciation, and detraction.

And yet it cannot be questioned that the absence of such a class would be a most serious misfortune to society at large. There is some good purpose to be served by most institutions which grow up spontaneously, or maintain their existence without extraneous support. And the existence of a class not compelled to labour for their daily bread—strange and scandalous as it seems to men whose sympathies are wholly engrossed by those who can hardly subsist by labour the most severe—yet confers on every class in society advantages which thoughtful men would be very sorry to forego. Of these, perhaps the least is, that those who have leisure for thought, for refinement, for elaborate self-culture, give a tone of polished ease and grace to the highest orders, which is imitated and partially reflected by those next below them, and which insensibly affects the habits and manners of all classes. But this is comparatively unimportant. There are many kinds of work which are of the highest importance, which demand the devotion of a lifetime, which require above all others talent, energy, and self-sacrifice, which cannot well be paid by direct agreement, and which cannot be done by men who are busy in earning a livelihood. The business of legislation and government is of this kind. We cannot well make it a source of profit without incurring danger of political profligacy and personal corruption, from which we are comparatively safe in the hands of men who are rich enough to serve gratuitously, or for a remuneration which barely defrays the inevitable expenses of office. Again,

Digitized by Google

how great is the importance attaching to those philanthropic efforts in which many men of the highest rank and fortune in this country are honourably distinguished! How ill we could dispense with such services; and yet how impossible it would be to appraise their money-value, or buy them with a price!

One thing, however, we must admit to be just, among the many irrational reflections cast upon the possessors of hereditary fortune. There is no being in the world more worthless and contemptible than the man who, not being forced to work for bread, takes advantage of his exemption not to work at all. But in this, as in most other respects, the tone of society is rapidly improving. Partly through the growing influence of new families, with whom work is a tradition and a pride, partly through the rise of a loftier sense of duty and a higher standard of morality among the classes in enjoyment of hereditary wealth, idleness has ceased to be honoured, and is fast tending to become disreputable. A dim consciousness of social responsibilities, hitherto shamefully neglected, is daily gaining prevalence and clearness among those who are, in morals as in manners, the lawgivers of society. Even writers like Mr. Holyoake, deeply imbued with the prejudices of a socialistic training, but candid in expression and open to conviction, admit a great improvement in this respect since the days in which Chartism and Socialism first sprang up; an improvement which has largely contributed to the rapid decay and present insignificance of the communistic and similar agitations in this country, while in France, though crushed by force and restrained by despotism, they continue to smoulder, and may at any moment break out into as fierce a flame as ever. Wherever the poor can be made to see that the rich do care for them, think for them, feel interested in their prosperity; that those whom talent or accident has placed above them are desirous to use those advantages for their benefit; that they are not—as agitators tell them, and as too many of their superiors still give them excuse for believing—objects of contempt or indifference to their more fortunate fellow-creatures,—we may expect to see the worst peril that threatens society removed, and the want of mutual confidence, which so grievously hampers all attempts for the instruction or elevation of the lower classes, cured by more knowledge and better feelings. To this closer understanding and more friendly feeling do we look for the best prospects of our future; in proportion as we approach it do we find political institutions more stable, society more secure, and moral and material progress easier and more rapid. Class alienation, not class distinction, is the disease of civilised society. The latter may exist in a high degree, as in England,

Digitized by Google

without danger or serious evil to any class; the former is fatal to the peace and security of all. Where the passions of the poor are fostered by selfish profligacy on the part of the rich; where arrogance on the one hand begets a vindictive malignity on the other; where poverty and ignorance are not taught practically to feel that their interests are cared for and their welfare faithfully regarded by the possessors of wealth, influence, and education,—there we shall and do find that

> ". . . . . these two parties still divide the world,
> Of those that want and those that have; and still
> The same old sore breaks out from age to age,
> With much the same result."

Art. IV.—THE PRESENT STATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY.

A Manual of Photographic Chemistry; including the Practice of the Collodion Process. By T. F. Hardwich. Fifth edition. Churchill.

The Journal of the London Photographic Society. Taylor and Francis.

It is no rare phrase that characterises the exciting age on which our lives are thrown as the age of the electric telegraph and of photography. These two of its most startling productions are naturally selected by the popular mind as representing in an emphatic and characteristic manner the rapid growth of a stupendous offspring from a seed of human knowledge so small that our fathers remember the day when it was hardly visible; like that great water-weed from the New World that is now choking our canals and filling the rivers from one end to the other of the land, and which sprang from some minute leaflet that a botanist may have struck but a short ten years ago. Each of these great practical triumphs of a scientific age has sprung into existence and fructified and covered the world with its results during a period so short, that the hair of the very men who introduced them is not yet gray. And each represents and is the type of a distinct method of growth: the one is a discovery, and the other an invention; the one was born of a dream and elaborated by the resolution of an indefatigable experimentalist, the other was little more than the application of scientific principles already established. Photography had little or no result of scientific truth to start from; electric telegraphy had all the results that a science highly elaborated could supply, and was the product of mechanical ingenuity availing itself of these.

Digitized by Google

The possibility of conducting the voltaic current by means of wires for considerable distances had been established; the beautiful discovery of the electro-magnet had been the reward of one of the great poets of science, Œrsted, and its laws had been pursued by a still greater one, Faraday. The mathematician had even brought the scattered results so achieved within the police of his analysis, and at least had sought to assign their laws, before Cooke had listened to elementary lectures on chemistry, and had sought the aid of Wheatstone to give a finished form to his telegraph. But the mechanical applications of scientific principles are generally effected by a different order of mind from that which discovers those principles. The investigator needs a kind of genius, the inventor rarely exhibits a faculty rising above ingenuity.

Photography was the child of investigation. Two persons, and two only, seem to have set about photographic discovery as Columbus looked for a new world; they were the elder Niepce and our countryman Mr. Fox Talbot.

We have few data for judging of the train of thought that led Nicéphore Niepce to work through many years at the problem of producing a picture by the sunlight, and which induced him to put a firm faith in the conviction that such an end was achievable. Others certainly had gone before; but unsuccessful attempts on the part of others are rather deterring than inspiriting in their influence on the mind of the man who would venture in the trodden path; so that the results of Wedgewood and Davy, which failed because they could by no then known means be rendered permanent, may have deterred M. Niepce from pursuing the course so successfully followed out subsequently by Mr. Talbot with the compounds of silver; while the less conclusive failure of Wollaston to make gum guiacum a photographic agent may, by proving at least the decided chemical change effected by the violet and blue light on that substance, have prepared the mind of M. Niepce for a resolute effort to make gum-resins a means to that great end, in the attainability of which he evidently believed. We may thus understand his elaborating the first practical and successful process of "heliography." He formed his picture on the bituminiferous substance called asphalt, or bitumen of Judæa ("Jew's pitch"), a body consisting of at least three, and probably many more substances of a resinous nature, and most likely very variable in its chemical characters. This mineral pitch is found in many places on the earth. The Dead Sea is its most historic locality; the pitch lake of Trinidad, the west coast of Africa, and several other places, produce resinous or pitchy solids which are more or less viscous or even liquid

Digitized by Google

under a tropical sun, and nearly related in their characters to this "bitumen of Judæa." This substance was found by M. Niepce to be so changed by the light as to be thereby rendered insoluble in substances that were capable of acting as solvents of it before it had been exposed to the luminous agency. This action of the light on many of these resinous substances consists, in fact, in a conversion of them into a new form of resin, more compact, more solid, and less soluble in certain essential and other oils than they are in their pristine state. M. Niepce discovered this fact; and after powdering the Dead Sea asphalt and exhausting it of all its unchanged (and therefore soluble) portion by oil of lavender, he next spread this solution (in comparative darkness, of course) on a polished plate of silver, and drove off the solvent oil by heat. The silver plate, thus coated with the soluble parts of the asphalt, was either exposed in the camera obscura for a lengthened time, or some leaf or other object was superimposed on it, and the light left to do its work wherever—and with a result in exact proportion to the intensity with which—its rays fell on the plate. After the action of the light was carried as far as was requisite, the plate was again removed to a dark room and treated with a mixture of the oil of lavender and natural petroleum, or rock-oil, —a liquid of very complex and mixed composition that exudes from the soil of many regions. This mixture dissolved the asphalt that had been unaltered by the light, leaving the altered portion upon the plate in quantity proportional to the intensity with which the light had operated. A picture remained, therefore, upon the silver surface represented by the asphalt in all the lighter portions of the original, whether an object in the camera, or a superimposed print, or any other thing that intercepted the light.

The first real result in a great discovery is always worth detailing, even though rendered obsolete by the march of events. The heliograph we have described was the first permanent photographic picture ever produced; and it belonged to M. Nicéphore Niepce to attain it. Its date was about the year 1826.

M. Niepce is next found in company with Daguerre, communicating his knowledge to him, and seeking his aid as a *collaborateur*. The Daguerreotype was the result. But Niepce died in 1833; and his son, M. Isidore Niepce, represented him in the scientific partnership when the process that bears the name of the other member of it startled the world in 1839.

The sensitive surface of iodide of silver, rendered soon afterwards still more sensitive by Claudet and others by the skilful use of chlorine and bromine, was proved to be susceptible of an

Digitized by Google

invisible impression of the sun's rays of such a kind, that in those places where the light had thus impressed it, the vapour of mercury would most readily condense; so that after exposing a plate of silver iodised on its surface to the action of light in the camera, a picture was developed by exposing it in a box filled with the vapour of this liquid and readily vaporised metal. The removal of the iodide by a suitable solvent left the plate susceptible of no further change, and upon it the picture depicted in mercurial whiteness on a dark ground of highly-polished silver. But we need no longer be haunted by the metallic spectre of the Daguerreotype. It has passed almost into the same limbo of oblivion as M. Niepce's Heliography, yielding its place to the processes that have sprung into existence as the immediate offspring of Mr. Talbot's Calotype.

The spirit in which Mr. Talbot set about his discovery of a photographic process, if not different from that which impelled M. Niepce, was at least as high and poetic a one as ever inspired a research.

It was on that beautiful Italian water whose triple arms converge on the point of Bellaggio that Mr. Talbot longed for a power to enable him to bear away an image of the soft silvery radiance of Lecco and Como. There he resolved to work out the problem by which Nature herself should be induced to perpetuate the outline of her own beauties in an artistic form. The earlier steps of his progress have never been told; but in 1839 there was an announcement made to the world of the birth of a new art practically available for this purpose. It was made simultaneously, though in different processes, in Paris and London; in Paris by M. Daguerre in the form of the Daguerreotype, in London by Mr. Fox Talbot in the shape of a "photogenic process" for copying leaves, prints, &c. by superposition of the same on a surface of paper prepared by certain salts of silver. On exposing this paper with its superposed object, the light darkened the paper wheresoever it either directly fell, or was able to penetrate the more or less transparent parts of the object. The result was a picture varying in the intensity of its shadows in proportion to the degree of transparency of the pictured object. The lights in that object were thus depicted in shadows, while its shadows were inversely represented by corresponding whiteness, the paper retaining the purity of its original whiteness where the opacity of the darkest parts of the object copied defended it from the luminous action. This last process was a great step in advance of the previous attempts of Davy and Wedgewood. They, indeed, had got so far as to operate on leather or paper treated

Digitized by Google

with nitrate or with chloride of silver; but they had neither produced so sensitive nor so dark-coloured a result as Mr. Talbot, nor had they succeeded in "setting" their picture at all. In endeavouring to trace the connection between the history of photography and that of the discoveries made in chemistry, that mighty mother-science one of whose children photography is, we cannot fail to recognise the quick activity, the Argus-eyed ubiquity of perception, with which the intelligence of man has step by step striven to push investigation into every new avenue as fast as it was opened to view by the onward march of the pioneers of chemical science. It was only in 1812 that the discovery of iodine was made. Before 1812, therefore, the Daguerreotype and the Calotype were alike impossible. The discovery of bromine in 1826 by Ballas completed a trine of elements of which the first, chlorine, was discovered by Scheele in 1794. These three bodies form a singularly interesting group among the elementary forms of matter as yet eliminated by the chemist.

Chlorine is a heavy yellow-green gas; bromine a rich carmine-red liquid with a brownish-red vapour; iodine an iron-gray crystalline, solid, easily vaporised by heat in the form of an exquisitely rich violet gas. Their chemical properties are in many respects so analogous, and they form so marked a group by themselves among the elements, as to have led more than one chemist to look on them as likely to furnish a key to the question, Are the chemical elements really prototypic material units indivisible into other forms of matter, or are they the manifold results of combination of a few such unit-forms? for the analysis of which the forces as yet in the hands of the chemist are not adequate. Such a question is necessarily speculative, and the hopes for an answer to it vague. But amid these elements, some sixty-three of which we know, this remarkable trine—chlorine, bromine, iodine—stand singularly unique in their analogies and in the degrees of their mutual difference.

They seem to represent to us three consecutive links in that long chain of which we have in the other elements the severed parts; which here and there, indeed, furnish other instances of consecutive order, yet are generally only sufficiently analogous to enable us to assign with some certainty their place in a long series. The intermediate links that would give continuity to the whole are absent. To the photographist this trine of elements possesses peculiar interest. They are in a peculiar degree photographic agents. Their compounds with silver are in many ways remarkable in their behaviour under the influence of light, and furnish the foundation of the most suscep-

Digitized by Google

tible processes for commemorating the presence of light with which we are at present acquainted; the compounds of silver forming surfaces exquisitely impressionable to this luminous action. In the heliography of Niepce the silver plays no further part than that of a finely-polished surface; and this use of it seems to have led accidentally to the discovery of Daguerre, that when the polished surface was exposed to the vapour of iodine, it became endowed in a high degree with a power which even the pure silver surface itself seems to a certain extent to possess, in common with many other polished surfaces, of condensing the breath and several other vapours on such parts as the light has illuminated.

Daguerre, as we have seen, discovered this character of the iodide of silver in the case of its action in condensing the mercurial vapour. But Mr. Talbot began his inquiries from another point; and it may be well to trace this development from that point. When silver is dissolved in any acid,—say in nitric acid, forming nitrate of silver,—and this solution is brought into contact with a solution of any of the direct compounds of chlorine with the alkaline metals,—for instance, with a solution in water of common salt, which is a compound of chlorine with sodium (the metal of soda),—a *precipitate*, to use a chemical term, is formed. That precipitate is chloride of silver. It results from this reaction: the chloride of sodium and nitrate of silver become chloride of silver and nitrate of sodium simply because the former of these bodies is incapable of solution in water, and therefore must fall as a solid to the bottom when liquids are mixed containing the elements that constitute it in the requisite form. This precipitate, the result of the chemical affinity that attracts the chlorine to the silver and forms the solid chloride, is a curdy substance, heavy when collected into a mass, and white as driven snow. It may be melted into a wax-like solid, and occurs in nature in this form. It was so known to the alchemists as horn-silver; and they seem to have been aware how to make it, though they could in no way at all explain its constitution.

The white precipitate is wonderfully sensitive to light, rapidly changing in sunlight, and more slowly in diffused daylight, to a violet and violet-gray, even to an almost iron-gray substance, chlorine being given off. The action is confined to the surface, so that every particle, however small, after being thus darkened in sunlight appears to consist of unchanged chloride throughout its whole substance except on the immediate and infinitesimal surface. Chemists have never yet succeeded in getting the darkened chloride separate from the white chloride, and thus this first step in the chemistry of pho-

Digitized by Google

tography is still unachieved; but the dark body is believed to be a subchloride, *i. e.* a chloride containing only half the chlorine contained in the white chloride. Other views have been published about it; but they are certainly erroneous, and this is at present the most probable view of the nature of the change. We have already mentioned how Mr. Talbot employed this substance and intensified its action in his "photogenic drawing," —the process which, with but slight additions and improvements, forms the sepia-tinted pictures of our photographic portfolios.

If, instead of taking a chloride to throw down the white precipitate from nitrate of silver, we employ an analogous iodide or bromide, *e. g.* the bromide or the iodide of potassium (the metal of the alkali potash), we obtain in either case a yellow precipitate very similar to the white one, but consisting of iodide of silver or bromide of silver according to the substance used. But we look in vain in these yellow precipitates for the property of becoming blackened under the solar influence. If perfectly pure, they retain their hue unchanged. Let, however, a small trace of nitrate of silver be present in excess of the definite amount requisite to form the iodide or the bromide, and a darkening takes place in the sunlight quite analogous to the intense darkening of the chloride under similar circumstances, and which constituted Mr. Talbot's photogenic process, and gave it its intensity and sensibility. The fact probably is, that the light is unable entirely to effect the decomposition of the iodide or bromide, though competent to decompose the chloride; but that if a substance be present like the nitrate of silver, capable of absorbing the iodine, bromine, or chlorine, and having, as silver has, an affinity for these elements, this invitation, as it were, to decomposition is rendered by the action of the light sufficiently potent to induce the transfer of the non-metallic element to the silver. Add to this that the molecule in the act of forming itself as chloride or iodide is under the influence of the same luminous agency, and we may understand the greater intensity of the dark result as illustrated in the photogenic process of Talbot. But this is not all; nor is this the only mode by which the light is effective in producing changes on those silver compounds capable of rendering service to the photographist.

Mr. Talbot's Calotype process was the embodiment of another fact into a photographic method. Of course the iodide, or either of the other two salts of silver that we have alluded to, may be formed on the surface of a sheet of paper by washing it with the two solutions consecutively.

Mr. Talbot found that a sheet of paper thus coated with the

Digitized by Google

iodide of silver, and treated with a small excess of the nitrate, had acquired a susceptibility to light of an extraordinary kind. Even though no visible change might have been effected by an exposure—it might be an instantaneous one—to light, he showed that a new state had been established in the sensitive surface where the light had fallen. It was a state analogous to that of a body that acts as a ferment; for the iodide had now become able to set up and to maintain decomposition in compounds ready to undergo such decomposition, but in which the condition of, so to say, unstable chemical equilibrium needed some external force, however minute, so long only that it be in the right direction, to set up the change. The agent which he found best to answer for this purpose was gallic acid, a substance obtained by a sort of fermenting process from gall-nuts, and connected by chemical relationship with the tanning principle in bark. This body, mixed with nitrate of silver, will keep clear for a little while in the dark, or by a yellow, green, or red light, though at once rendered turbid in daylight. The balance of its unstable equilibrium was adjusted and brought under control by the use of a few drops of an acid. When, therefore, the "iodised" paper was washed with nitrate of silver, or with this mixture when very great sensitiveness was needed, and then exposed to the light, an action was instantly set up which would go on in the dark, and needed time only for its development by the subsequent use of the gallic-acid mixture. When once "developed," the picture, having the appearance of a yellow drawing on a black ground, was washed and fixed by an agent that arrested the further action on the iodised surface.

For the means of effectually doing this, photography is indebted to a beautiful discovery by Sir John Herschel of a compound of sulphur called hyposulphurous acid. The soda-salt of this acid, the hyposulphite of soda, has the property of dissolving and forming a double salt with the compounds of silver otherwise of such difficult solubility which we have described. The dark image is left comparatively uninjured by the use of this hyposulphite of soda, so that it needs but proper treatment by it to abstract every silver preparation from the paper save the dark deposit that forms the picture. Mr. Talbot had used at first another and far less effectual means of fixing his Calotype as well as his photogenic pictures, and the employment of this admirable discovery was a new era in the art. We shall speak presently of the negative and positive forms of pictures which formed the matrix and the copies respectively in this Calotype process; as they form equally the peculiarity, and in convenience the superiority, over the Daguerreotype, of

Digitized by Google

the processes that have grown out of the improvements on the Calotype. We need not, therefore, linger over the original form of the Calotype, except so long as may be necessary to follow the steps by which photography has progressed to its present beautiful delicacy. This progress has been due primarily to the improvement of the material or medium used as the surface to receive and retain the sensitive chemical combinations employed, and after that in important variations introduced into the process in order to make these improved materials available. A curious discovery was announced to the Southampton meeting of the British Association in 1846. It was made by Schönbein. This gentleman has been distinguished for a singular faculty of recognising and bringing into attention phenomena of an obscure and subtle character, though, perhaps from the intrinsic difficulties of the subjects, he has not been equally happy in explaining them. Thus the mysterious and even now perhaps not satisfactorily investigated substance ozone was experimented on by Schönbein, and the various phenomena which seemed analogous and to belong to it were somewhat indiscriminately grouped together, though certainly not explained by him; and in the announcement to which we are now alluding he was equally successful in an interesting discovery, though chemistry has had a difficult task since in the elucidation of it. That discovery was gun-cotton, the substance into which cotton is converted, with no apparent change in its flocculent texture and physical characters, by the action of nitric acid in the presence of sulphuric acid. Schönbein had sent to Faraday, shortly after this announcement, a cup made of his gun-cotton; but the cup was transparent as glass, and of the texture of goldbeater's skin. It was formed by dissolving a variety of the gun-cotton in an ethereal solvent, and after pouring a little of the viscid solution into, and so coating, the hollow of a cup, permitting the ethereal solvent to evaporate, and so leave behind it the textureless residue of transparent explosive cotton. This solution of gun-cotton became presently applied in hospitals under the unintelligible name of collodion, being used as a self-adjusting plaster, which was poured in solution over cuts and wounds, and which after evaporation was left like a transparent film of goldbeater's skin firmly adhering to the wound.

It was about the year 1852 that two photographists, we believe independently, M. Le Gray in Paris and the late Mr. Archer in this country, conceived the idea of substituting for the coarse paper of the Calotype the incomparably delicate and grainless tissue of this new material. No one can for a moment fail to grasp the great improvement involved in such a sub-

Digitized by Google

stitution. The finest paper that art could produce must needs be formed of a pulp whose essential ingredient is a fibre; and the filamentous character of this fibre cannot be entirely destroyed. Such paper consequently presents as a transparency a mottled appearance, and by reflected light reveals under a magnifying glass an inequality of surface which no mechanical rolling can remove. Such a substance is not the material to exhibit the beautiful delicacy of the pictures which it was in the power of the pencil of light to draw. It was in this respect indeed, rather than for any other superiority in the character of the earlier form of the Daguerreotype, that this French process took away the palm from its English rival. The exquisite, the absolute evenness of surface of the silver plate enabled the photographic process to deposit upon that surface its minutest beauties in microscopic perfection of detail; while the coarse grain of the paper surface was, in comparison to the plate of silver, as though the engraver should endeavour to depict on a rough slab of cast-iron the fine tracing and delicate imagery of a steel engraving. Wax had been used, indeed, to communicate a transparency and an evenness to the texture of the paper, and delicate tissues of pure paper were manufactured expressly for the photographist. The wonder is, not that all the efforts of photography in this direction were incomplete in their result, but that the marvellous and delicate pictures were obtained at all, which from the earliest days of the Calotype would every now and then, with a capriciousness peculiar to this empiric art, reward the untiring industry of the votary of the sun.

But wax-paper and every paper process soon yielded before the new tissue which the ingenuity of the gentlemen we have named now gave to the photographic manipulator.

The fluid gun-cotton needed, indeed, a rather different treatment from that pursued with the paper processes. Instead of forming the iodide of silver in the film of gun-cotton, this was only impregnated with a solution containing iodine. The collodion thus charged is poured upon a rigorously clean plate of smooth glass, and allowed to flow off again. The small quantity of the substance adhering to the glass is enough to produce when dry that delicate and transparent film of "gun-cotton" whose invisible tissue carries within it all the work of the solar pencil. But before the ethereal solvent has completely passed off, and as soon as it has done so sufficiently to allow the cotton to become somewhat continuous in its texture, it is plunged into a bath of nitrate of silver, wherein the iodine in the collodion film meets with the silver for which its affinity is so strong, and an even layer of pale yellow solid iodide of silver is

Digitized by Google

produced over the whole surface of the glass, imprisoned in the delicate transparent tissue of the cotton adhering to it. It is now ready for the camera; and if all the ingredients have been the result of that happy combination of good luck with careful manipulation which seems to wait on the best photographists, the film coating that glass plate is the most sensitive of all photographic surfaces, and at the same time capable of exhibiting the delicate delineations of a perfect photograph as no other surface yet known can do. We will follow the manipulator into his dark chamber. The small amount of light allowed by his jealous care to penetrate that room of mysteries is admitted only through yellow glass, and thereby filtered of those blue and violet as well as invisible rays which are the energetic agents in the photographic result. Here we enter; and if the experiment has been a successful one, ere we go out we shall be witnesses to a stroke of magic that might have made the teeth of Cagliostro chatter. From out of his dark slide the photographist takes a square of glass. On its surface is spread that translucent film—infinitely delicate, for a touch will tatter it—on which so much careful skill has been brought to bear. It has just been exposed in the camera; in other words, for a few rapid seconds that delicate film has been placed where the image of some natural object—perhaps some pretty country scene—has been projected by a lens upon a focused plane. That fairy miniature formed by the well-adjusted convergences of the refracted pencils of light, is a thing so beautiful, so unspeakably lovely, that none can for the first time look on the ground-glass of a camera focused to a beautiful scene without carrying away a new feeling and a new delight. That lovely little picture is but a fantasy. Though every varied tint and every waving form be seen there, as the eye sees it in nature, even perhaps more intense in its brilliancy from its being more minute and concentrated, so to speak, in its scale; yet remove the glass screen on which the image falls, and it is gone, unsubstantial as a dream, and with something of a lovely dream's fascination. But let the glass screen be replaced by the sensitive collodion film, and some at least of the imagery of that otherwise transient picture may be rescued from oblivion. Was not the man a poet to whose mind this thought came on the Lake of Como? was it not something of the creative faculty of the true ποιητής that gave that thought its first triumphant realisation? We look then on the filmed surface of the glass, that has for those two or three seconds been the retina, as it were, on which that image in the camera was projected; but it exhibits only a blank. The most careful scrutiny will reveal no change in it. But no time must be lost,

Digitized by Google

or the surface will be too dry to receive the next process, by which the photographist sweeps rapidly over the glass plate a wave of a susceptible liquid. It is a mixture of a little acetic acid, a very little nitrate of silver, and a solution of a remarkable substance formed by the distillation of the gallic acid we have spoken of before (pyrogallic acid). Look on the glass plate—a moment's pause—it is but a moment; for now, revealed with magic suddenness, and growing rapidly with increasing loveliness, each moment brighter, clearer, sharper, there is the picture. But the sky is black; and athwart it, with infinite ramifications of twig and gnarled branch, each point tipped with the young bursting leaf-buds (for it is full springtide), stands out in a weird contrast that oak-tree in the foreground, white against the dark midnight-looking sky; yet not entirely white, for a closer view, as the magic growth is fulfilling itself, reveals a thousand pencillings of delicate lines and inexplicable shadows, giving roundness, sharpness, life, to every organic twist of the old tree. Underneath and round it, from the black stone on the foreground in relief on the white grass to the tiny fairy cottage under the hill beside the far-drawn perspective of that dark watered streamlet, a black cottage with its white window-lattices, is spread a scene; not indeed the same we saw but now on the screen of the camera, and yet how like it! The outline is the same. That old oak is a familiar friend loved by our grandsires, and one cannot fail to recognise its well-known form. Under the hill stands indeed a cottage, and its little roadway fords the streamlet; but it is in reality a *white* cottage, with its brightly-gleaming windows barred by dark lattice—a little cottage-home of England. Why is that gleaming river a dark line, and not a delicate white thread of gleaming rapids? One word explains the spell; it is a negative picture. Those strange underlights in the oak-boughs are thrown by no level sun setting on the horizon. Those shadows are not flung athwart some "land lit by a large low moon." Those weird *lights* are natural *shadows*, and those inexplicable shades are the lights of the natural picture; but the lights have left a darkening impress on the sensitive surface, and the shadows of Nature are left as lights on the photograph, because there the plate was less illuminated when they fell. The picture is complete, and the practised eye of the operator sees the moment to be come when further development would be prejudicial, and the action must be stopped. He washes it carefully but thoroughly with water; and the picture, as now looked at, is composed of "lights" in Nature, represented by the *dark* silver deposit, and "shadows," represented by the primrose-*yellow* iodide of silver still remaining in those parts

Digitized by Google

of the film where the light was comparatively inactive: by the yellow light the tint of the iodide is undistinguishable from white, and its comparative opacity gives a "body" to the picture. It only remains now to fix the image. It is true that after a sufficient washing it may be exposed to moderate daylight without injury; but the picture is at present impervious to photographic light. The yellow tint of the iodide is as impenetrable to the chemical agency of the rays as are the darker portions on which the light has done its work. And as the next step in the process requires that these yellow lights should be transparent and permeable by that chemical agency, it becomes necessary to remove the yellow iodide from the film. Either an alkaline salt of prussic acid or the hyposulphite of soda may be used for this purpose; and this is not the least curious part of the operation to observe. The yellow opacity rapidly vanishes; and where it before was the glass plate seems left perfectly pure, with nothing upon it save the photographic image. A closer inspection will reveal the exquisitely delicate sheet of the gun-cotton—pyroxyline—still clinging to the glass, and carrying in its thin web the dark silver deposit which forms the picture. What that deposit is, except that it contains silver, no chemist yet knows. It were needless to remark on the skill, the patience, the nerve needed to preserve that delicate film of pyroxyline intact through so many manipulations, by any one of which it might be floated away like a gossamer from the glass surface to which it has but little adhesion; a pin's point would make a hole that would break the spell of its continuity and doom it to destruction. Nowadays, indeed, the skill of the photographist may be confined to a very few of the many steps in the process of forming a photograph. The chemistry of the substance he deals in may be a sealed book to him, and, indeed, in general is. He can buy all his materials in the most admirable state of preparation; and all that is left to him to learn is how easily he can throw away by the smallest carelessness all the results of the experience, the patience, and the skill that have been expended on the preparations that he buys. Such a person little knows how many failures and how much perseverance have led to the production of the collodion he may waste like water, or the silver-bath which he abuses because it does not yield him pictures, while perhaps he has himself by one unperceived act of carelessness upset that delicate balance in its ingredients, the adjustment of which is one of the greatest niceties in this most capricious and yet most precise of arts. But if he has himself gone into the details of his preparations in the only true artist's way, has worked at the manufacture of his own materials; if he has become fami-

Digitized by Google

liar with the fine precautions to be taken with the strength and temperature of the acids by the aid of which he manufactures his "pyroxyline;" with the purity of the alcohol and ether in which he dissolves it; with the right adjustment of the proportions of these, on which, strange to say, he will find the sensitiveness of his pictures greatly to depend; or, again, if he has studied those subtle mysteries of the silver-bath which experience and keen observation alone can teach,—then, and then only, can he be in a position to feel the true enjoyment of the photographist, and only then will he be able to appreciate the delight of triumph and success, the sort of excitement said to belong to the winner in those games or pursuits in which something of chance or luck is associated with, and rendered available by, considerable skill. His occasional failures he will then meekly bear; and may perhaps console himself as we remember a Wiltshire tenant to have done, who, priding himself on his success in horseflesh, and having once made a bad bargain, looked on the ground with the remark, "Well, sir, at the best of time they be casialty jokers, hosses be!"

The operation that has produced the picture on the glass, as we have thus far sketched it, is an operation complete in itself. The picture needs only to be protected by pouring over it a solution of amber in chloroform, or of some analogous varnish dissolved in a volatile liquid incapable of dissolving the film. This is done in the same manner as the glass was coated at first with the collodion. The dissolved resin is poured rapidly on, and as rapidly poured off again, the chloroform evaporates, and the picture is protected for ever by a fine varnish. But it remains now to invert the spell of this negative photograph, and to present the picture in its true lights and shadows, and not with these reversed, as in the case of the picture thus far produced. This is effected by the original photogenic process of Mr. Talbot, on which some few improvements have been made since it was published in 1839.

On a sheet of paper, then, rendered photographic by that process, or on a plate of glass prepared with a collodion surface, the original negative is placed, with its face downward and in contact with the prepared surface. The two are pressed together in a frame and exposed to the light. This permeates the lighter portions of the negative with intensity, and with an operative photographic influence on the prepared surface beneath exactly proportionate to the transparency of the image. The result is therefore a *positive* picture, with its lights and shades and all their gradations of intensity precisely the inverse in degree, as in character, to those of the original negative. Our dark sky, with the weird oak-boughs in white relief,

Digitized by Google

revert into a bright heaven with dark oak-branches athwart it; our white grass becomes, indeed, a too dark lawn; but the little cottage under the hill once more gleams in its cheerful hue by a running water of silvery whiteness: and photography has now done all it can do to retain as a reality that phantom imagery of the camera obscura. In point of detail in the outline and in the drawing, little more can be desired; but in the grand harmony of landscape, which is colour, the photograph unhappily is not only a failure, but even its sepia hues express, in the delicate gradations of their intensity, nothing of the relative brilliancy of the colours of nature, but follow a law of their own so entirely capricious, as to make a photograph little more true as a representation of the scene it depicts than is the aspect of that scene when looked at constantly through a deep-blue glass.

Various means have been employed to give to the surface of the paper an artificial and more smooth face, and many attempts have been made to render the photograph more surely permanent than was the case with Mr. Talbot's process in its original form. The former object has been most successfully attained by the application on the paper previously to its being treated with the photographic agents of an albuminous varnish formed of the white of egg, so that the photographic image is produced rather on the surface than in the substance of the paper. The greater fixity of the image seems to have been best secured hitherto by the use of a process subsequent to the completion of the photogenic picture. This process consists in the use of a gold salt of such a character that, on its coming in contact with the silvery deposit on the paper, it substitutes gold for the silver; and thus removing a metal easily influenced by even atmospheric agencies, it supplies that metal's place by another whose affinities are of a more inert order, and whose power of resisting the influences that seem peculiarly destructive of the photograph is probably greater than that of any other among even the so-called noble metals. The gold photograph thus formed varies, according to the mode of manipulating, from a dark violet-black to a pale lavender hue; but some of the tints procured by it may for their effect vie successfully with even the warm sepia tint of a well-managed silver photograph.

Thus far our attention has been drawn only to the methods adopted for producing the photographic pictures which swarm on every drawing-room table and in every portfolio. But there are other aspects of this wonderful art. We may look at it from a point of view in which it will seem little else than a ghastly misrepresentation of nature, little more true to the reality than was that automaton doll with an artificial voice,

Digitized by Google

exhibited a few years since in London, which only sufficiently represented the sounds of the human voice to prove how immeasurably transcendent was that supple organ of natural intonation to the most refined mechanism that could be framed to imitate it. We have alluded to the great failure in the photograph in the representation of colour, however exact and minute may be its delineation of details. In point of fact, the photograph represents but two colours out of Newton's seven, and takes cognisance of but one extreme of the series of manifold hues of the rainbow. If a line of direct sunlight be admitted through a small hole into a dark room, an image of the sun will be formed on a screen at some distance from the window. If a prism be interposed in the path of the ray, instead of an image of the sun there will be an indefinite number of these, as though overlapping each other and forming a long oval, each being refracted out of the direct ray a little more than the one it overlies; and each is of a different colour. Thus the red is the least diverted image, while the violet is in situation the most remote from the direction of the original ray. The bit of rainbow which these in fact indefinite number of successive images of the sun combine to form, is the so-called *solar spectrum*. Of the whole range of its myriad hues the eye sits in judgment on a comparatively small section, the visible spectrum, extending from a deep red to the almost lavender tint, being much less than one-half of the whole. For colour is not the only attribute of the light thus analysed into its component tints; to each angle of refrangibility, indeed,—that is to say, to each degree of divergence from its original direction which the several strands of the thus unravelled thread of light will take,—belongs a series of attributes. The radiant heat, the light, the multifarious chemical agencies, seem to be but so many phases of this one wonderful vibration, which, even in its invisible attributes, we must include under the general name of Light, or of solar radiation; and the separation of these characteristic expressions of solar force from each other is a problem which science, as yet at least, has not in any manner solved. The particular class of chemical forces that are operative in the production of the ordinary photographs resides almost entirely in the portion of the light which vibrates most rapidly, and extends, when dispersed in the rainbow form, from the indigo and through the violet into a long space wherein the eye detects no light at all; so that the very light which the human eye cannot see is the illuminating influence by means of which, for the most part, the eye of the photographic camera looks out into the world.

If we can picture in our imagination the effect upon our

Digitized by Google

own senses of a beautiful scene, which we should look on with an eye that saw not colours as we see them,—to which red and yellow and green were as darkness, and the only apparent colours of the garb of Nature were dark-blue and violet and a long range of tints passing through lavender into a series of hues that eye hath never seen nor the mind conceived of,—then indeed we form a notion of the sort of view which the camera represents to us by the photograph.

To the photographist, then, all the most luminous, the most cheerful, the most varied hues in nature are as the outer darkness; their effect on the photographic compounds he employs is comparatively nothing; and the view his picture represents is, in fact, impressed on his sensitive surface by rays for the most part of too high refrangibility to be visible. It is hardly strange, then, that the delicate blush-red on a lovely cheek should be in the photographic portrait as though it were a dark stain, or that the golden eye of the water-lily should come out from the collodion plate as a black mass in the midst of those snow-white petals; that the primrose, or the rose "embowered in its own green leaves," should present no contrast between its petals and their lovely fringe; or, again, that the sweet "pleasant green" of foliage that the eye so loves to dwell on should need a prolonged exposure to afford time for the ordinary light that is dispersed from the leaf-surfaces to operate the chemical change which the abundant green light itself is unable to effect. On the other hand too, one can understand, with this explanation in one's mind, why in an ordinary photograph a blue sky should be so intensely white, while the green tree, however brilliantly illuminated, is a black mass in comparison. Indeed, the wonder is that one can look at a photograph with any patience at all, and that we do not instinctively recognise the wide gulf between the *chiaro oscuro* of the silver picture and that of any sepia drawing that would depict with at all faithful relations of intensity the impressions made on the eye by the gradations of light as seen through the medium of colour. The only case where the contrasts of the photograph are not false is that in which the object is monochromatic,—where the colour upon that object consists in various tones of one and the same, or nearly the same, tint. Hence the purposes to which photography is best adapted are architectural views, statues, small foreground pictures where the whole scene is of one colour, whether rock and stone or a mass of well-illuminated foliage, or where the two are united, provided that the rock and soil be of a dark colour or a red hue, in which case its photographic action is very similar to that of foliage. But perhaps the most valuable

Digitized by Google

application of photography is one in which it has already been very successfully employed,—the reproduction, namely, of facsimile drawings after Raphael and the other great artists whose genius could write a poem in a line, and convey the expression of a human heart in a symbol little other than a dot, yet embodying the thousand-fold cares, sorrows, and affections of a human eye. Here the photograph is an unrivalled, an unapproachable transcriber. Photography will doubtless be also continually more employed in perpetuating and disseminating engraved works, such as those of Marc Antonio; while as an unerring copyist of the records of other times in other lands,—in giving to a Rawlinson the materials for his researches in the form of exact copies of inscriptions on the great monuments of Assyria or Egypt,—it has done much, and will do more, good service.

Photography is an art so empirical in its origin, and, though the facts on which it rests are fundamentally chemical, is so little indebted to chemistry for any satisfactory explanation of these facts, that the chief interest attaching to any record of its development is to be found rather in the ingenuity that has made a few unexplained chemical facts the instruments of such marvellous results than in any popular treatment of the scientific bearing of the facts themselves. Hence, in such a review as we are taking of photographic achievements, it is with processes that we have to deal rather than with the triumphs of theoretical science in a new domain. Yet it would be an injustice to the chemistry of the greatest chemical age to omit the efforts that have been made to throw light on the obscure phenomena in which photography deals. So obscure, indeed, are these phenomena, that at the present moment no single law of chemical action can be declared proved regarding the special kinds of chemical change which the light effects. Decompositions are undoubtedly effected by solar agency; but they are so far like other effects with which chemistry deals, that they are the decompositions which are necessary to, and which herald, a recomposition of the severed elements in a new order. It is as if the light was one of the influences in nature whose office is to regulate the balance of the chemical powers residing in the elements, and to impress a peculiar character on those natural tendencies to union which result in chemical combination. We know as yet nothing definite regarding the special direction thus imparted to those tendencies or "affinities;" but we do know that it is in many cases quite a different class of changes from those which heat effects,—quite different too from those which that other divellent force, the electric current, enforces. Thus, to illustrate

Digitized by Google

our point by the example of a body which we have already described, the chloride of silver, we have seen that the action of light on this chloride of silver is to induce a specific decomposition into chlorine and some body which is probably a subchloride of silver. A considerable heat, however, affects this chloride in no other way than, as we have seen, to fuse it. The voltaic force, on the other hand, completely severs its constituent elements, producing silver at one pole and chlorine at the other. So, too, the sensitive surface of the Daguerreotype, or that of the collodion plate, or the highly delicate mixture used by Mr. Talbot for developing his Calotype pictures, are unchanged for some time by any temperature ordinarily experienced in our climate. Yet a ray, however faint, of the coldest daylight instantaneously effects the photographic change, which warmth has no power to bring about: indeed, the changes which higher temperatures can effect in these several cases appear to be totally different in kind from those impressed by the solar ray.

Among those who have laboured in this most recondite field of chemical research, Sir John Herschel stands even now the foremost. His papers, published seventeen years ago, are still valuable for the mass of interesting experiments they contain. He made many salts of silver and of other metals the objects of his experiments, and instituted a most interesting inquiry into the behaviour of vegetable colours under the influence of the solar rays. But what gave the high interest to his memoirs which they will always carry, was the careful observation, and the ingenious means employed therein, of the influence of the different parts of the solar spectrum, or, in other words, of the different colours, in effecting the changes to which he drew attention. Dr. Draper, M. Becquerel, and others, have followed in the same path, and have instituted interesting inquiries into the action of different kinds of light in encouraging or hindering the germination and the growth of plants. The latter subject, however, is aside of the photographic phenomena we are considering; and the results as yet arrived at are of a very uncertain character. Mr. Hunt, an officer of the institution for the Geological Survey, devoted much time to researches into these various effects of solar radiation; and it is much to be regretted that a more exact training in the accurate processes of the chemist, and a little more of the spirit of the investigator, had not given to his many efforts at research in this direction more successful and reliable results. He gave one fact to photography of considerable interest, and of some practical use: he showed that a protosalt of iron was capable of developing the Calotype picture in place of, and

Digitized by Google

with similar result to, the action of gallic acid employed by Mr. Talbot, or of the pyrogallic acid of the improved processes. This fact has never been sufficiently followed up; and it is probably by the careful investigation of the deoxidising influence of this and of other analogous substances in furthering actions set on foot, but not completed, by the action of the solar rays, that we may best hope to elucidate the laws of that action.

Many facts point to this, that the deoxidation attributed to the influence of the light seems to belong to the class of chemical decompositions before alluded to, namely those in which new combinations result from, or rather are simultaneous with those decompositions, so that the deoxidation of one body under the solar agency may imply with as much truth the oxidation of another body, and indeed may be dependent on, or at least not effected without the latter. These changes in the degree of oxidation in bodies seem also to dwell in a peculiar region of chemical combination; they are, at any rate, most frequently met with in substances susceptible of different degrees of oxidation, *i. e.* of combining with different multiples of the chemical units of oxygen, and consist in transitions from one of these degrees to another; transitions which are most frequently aided by the external impulse given by the affinities of some third substance.

The chemical action of solar radiation would thus appear to be, in many cases at least, an influence inducing, or tending to induce, chemical changes of the character of concurrent decompositions and re-combinations; but an influence more subtle in action, and less violent, so to say, in its disruptive power on chemical compounds, than are either the decomposing force of ordinary heat or the divellent power of voltaic electricity. There are, indeed, phenomena that are not, at first sight at least, capable of being brought under this explanation. One such is the union of chlorine and hydrogen, which is effected with explosive violence in sunlight, and the laws of which have been most admirably followed up by Mr. Roscoe in the laboratory of Professor Bunsen. But we are considering here especially those changes effected by the light which have been employed by the photographist; and we must not permit ourselves to be diverted into a digression upon the general chemistry of the solar beam.

Yet, in truth, one is tempted to pause for a moment to call attention to the strange power with which we are here dealing. When we think of that subtle radiation, that vibration trembling along the far regions of space with a swiftness measured by nearly 200,000 miles in a second, and with a tremulous motion whose pulses in the air vary from 16,000,000ths to

Digitized by Google

26,000,000ths of an inch in length; when we think of this pulsation as a motion, not as a transmission of a material essence—as the handing on of a mere passing movement from particle to particle of an elastic, all-filling, subtle form of matter, like the swaying of a crowd to and fro in some densely-packed avenue,—when one thus thinks of this subtle influence, light, one is indeed lost in wonder before the complexity of the results it produces, and the infinite variety of blessings that that rapid little motion brings to us. For is it not the feeding influence of all life, the very nerve-force of this universe? To use a significant illustration of the degree in which we are dependent on this "offspring of heaven first-born," may we not instance, as but one among ten thousand similar facts, the observation of the first Stephenson, that the steam-engine is but the means of using the force of solar radiation which has been preserved in the bowels of the earth for the long geological ages that have passed since those suns rose and set in whose light the coal-plants grew? When we think that radiant heat, that visible light with its ten thousand lovely hues, that chemical agencies of so subtle a kind that while the chemist uses them he vainly tries to simulate them in the processes of his laboratory, are all but phases of this one vibration,—are, in fact, but expressions of its greater or less rapidity of vibration,—one may well feel overwhelmed with the view opened up to us by this one glance into one series of the marvels of this most intricate universe. One may perhaps look on the fire-worshiper in his orison before the rising sun as something better than a benighted idiot; for one may look on the inspiration of his creed as caught from those same thoughts that surrounded Apollo with a grace, and invested him with a power so happily expressed in Shelley's glorious hymn:

> "I feed the clouds, the rainbows, and the flowers
> With the ethereal colours; the moon's globe
> And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
> Are cinctured with my power as with a robe;
> Whatever lamps on earth or heaven may shine
> Are portions of one power, which is mine.
> * * * * * * *
> I am the eye with which the universe
> Beholds itself and knows itself divine;
> All harmony of instrument or verse,
> All prophecy, all medicine are mine;
> All light of art or nature:—to my song
> Victory and praise in their own right belong."

But we must return to the photographist, who at least knows how to invoke this Phœbus Apollo in one of his Homeric attributes, *κλῦθι μοῦ Ἀργυρότοξ*. And we may proceed to ex-

Digitized by Google

plain some of the further efforts that have been made in the most recent times to render available this silver-fraught instrument of his beams, and to give extension, permanence, and increased applications to the results of the camera.

These are comprised under three divisions:

1. Methods of rendering the sensitive plates portable, so that they need not be used the moment they are prepared, *i. e.* preservative processes.

2. Methods of producing actual engravings or printing blocks from which prints can be taken, *i. e.* phototypic and photoglyphic methods.

3. And finally, some of the applications, whether useful, artistic, or only curious, to which photography has been applied.

To enlarge on each and all of these subjects would be certainly to go beyond the limits of a general article, and to engage in the details of a complete treatise; and any one who would study these details of photographic manipulation, and read them in the light of sound chemistry and good sense, would do well to procure the portable little volume of Mr. Hardwich of King's College; a book not perhaps replete with much original suggestion, but certainly the work of a sound chemist and honest photographist, who has shirked none of the difficulties of the subject, and if he has not overcome all, has conquered many, and has at least faced the rest. The still ill-edited *Journal of the London Photographic Society* contains most of the undigested results of the efforts of inventors, and in its voluminous pages an article or two may be found here and there embodying the details of those photoglyphic and phototypic methods to which we shall advert for a few moments presently.

The preservative processes have for their object the retaining the surface of the collodion plate in a state of sensitiveness; and the usual, but not the only method of effecting this, is by the use of a substance that will keep that surface constantly moist. The processes most successful in achieving this end are those which employ sugar in a peculiar state, and are variously named according as that sugar is applied in the form of honey or of treacle, or of a compound of these with other substances. To judge by the results, the most effective of these methods must be that of Mr. Llewelyn, who uses a substance termed oxymel for the purpose; for certainly in exquisite gradation of half-tint, and for all that constitutes a good photograph, his oxymel pictures are equal to the finest results of the ordinary wet collodion, and in this respect excel those as yet exhibited by the champions of other preservative processes. Yet

Digitized by Google

others have tried this oxymel process of Mr. Llewelyn, and find it no exception to the ordinary rule of photographic results,—too often an annoying failure, though in its inventor's hand it appears never to fail for an hour. Perhaps if photographists dealt more with their materials as the true chemist deals with them, their results would be more accordant and more certain. There are several varieties of sugar; and one of these is probably the best adapted for the purpose under consideration. It is neither the highly crystallisable cane-sugar, nor the somewhat less easily crystallised grape-sugar, the ordinary sugar of fruits, &c.; but it is a variety called fruit-sugar, the *Obstzucker* of the German chemists, which is entirely incapable of assuming a crystalline form, and forms by evaporation only a viscous fluid. This can be produced by the careful adjustment of the action of acids on ordinary sugars; and it seems highly probable that this is the sugar which Mr. Llewelyn and other inventors of keeping processes have lit upon in their experiments. The success of such processes of course is dependent on very nice adjustment of the proportions of the ingredients used (especially, in this instance, in the nature of the collodion), and very minute care in manipulatory details. Dry processes have also been employed with much success in which resin is an ingredient, or in which the plate has first been coated with albumen, or some other more or less elastic basis; but for delicacy of middle tint, as we have before observed, these yield in our judgment to the sugar processes.

Efforts have been made also to compel the sun not only to draw with the pencil of light original limnings, but also to engrave these in etched lines, or otherwise to aid in forming plates that may be employed in the printing-press. These efforts have been stimulated partly by the great uncertainty as to the permanence of the photographs produced by the present processes, and partly by the desire to multiply some kinds of photographic result with the greater rapidity and with the other advantages attending the employment of printer's ink. Not one of these can yet be said to be a successful process, from the promising photoglyphic process of Mr. Talbot to the complex photogalvanoplastic process which borrowed its fundamental fact from Mr. Talbot's first method.

A few beautiful results have been certainly produced by the latter, and the graver's tool has not in all cases been necessary as an auxiliary to the processes of the photographer, though in general its aid has been sought to fill up the details of the shadows. Mr. Talbot's method, like one that has been employed in France, applied to a lithographic stone, needs further elaboration, but is full of promise. All these methods employ one

Digitized by Google

fundamental photographic property of the light, but employ it in different ways. It consists in a change of the kind we have before explained,—a deoxidation of a high oxide of the metal chromium with the production of a lower oxide of that metal; the oxygen that is separated from it going over to an organic substance employed with the chromic compound, which thus becomes changed into some new substance. Heat will not effect this alteration,—it effects a different one. But the light carries it out; and in this manner gelatine or gum, and a variety of other bodies, undergo changes which, as in Niepce's first experiments with asphalt, cause those bodies to become insoluble after the action has taken place. We will not follow out this result into the details of the various processes that take advantage of it. They are sufficiently numerous, sufficiently various, and all so ingenious as to give every prospect of a process being ere long achieved superior to every other, and which shall enable the photographist, whenever he takes a good photograph of which he is anxious to make a large number of permanent prints, to produce from it, by a process purely photographic and chemical, a steel, a zinc, or a copper plate, or perhaps a lithographic stone, from which he may print off as many copies in printer's ink as he might have done had his plate been engraved by the burin, or his stone drawn by lithographic chalk. The engraved or photoglyphic processes, and the surface pictures or phototypic processes, whether on metal or stone, promise each peculiar advantages of their own. In all one difficulty has to be overcome, arising from the circumstance that the printer's ink needs some hollow to lie in, in order that it may adhere to the plate; so that a large breadth of shadow can only be covered by a method that causes hollows to be formed over the whole shadow. The line-engraver employs lines for this purpose; and in the aqua-tint, mezzo-tint, and lithographic printing various means are adopted to give a grain to the surfaces which the ink is to cover. These methods have suggested ingenious and corresponding arrangements to the phototypist and photoglyphist; and one is so ingenious, and, whether practicable as a process or not, is so worthy of its author, that it may be interesting to record it. Mr. Talbot has suggested for the purpose the use of a fine lace-net in advance of the picture, so that the light itself impresses the lines of immunity from its own action, between which the hollows are etched in that are to form the receptacles of the printer's ink.

It remains to us to put on record some of the applications to which photography has been applied. And, indeed, the recent and sudden call from the scene of his valuable labours of one who energetically promoted one of these applications seems

Digitized by Google

to call for a statement of the modes he employed to effect this one among the many results of his life. Manuel Johnson, but yesterday the Radcliffe Observer at Oxford, established at that observatory, which he raised to so high a place among the observatories of the world, a complete series of meteorological records. These records were continuous and automaton. Clockwork kept a sheet of paper constantly moving behind each meteorological instrument, and as it moved a lamp threw on it a column of light. The length of that column constantly changed; and an inspection of the instrument would show that that change was really caused by the variation of length, it may be in the mercurial column of the barometer, or of the thermometer, or it might arise from a change in the humidity in the air, in the direction of the ever-vacillating gusts of the wind, or in the wind's force. Thus there were constantly, day and night, a series of long slips of paper on which these shadows were thrown, and which silently, surely, and with no visible change on the paper itself, passed regularly on, each succeeding part of the paper receiving that image as it varied with the successive moments of time. But that fleeting shadow had left its impress there; for the paper was photographically prepared, and needed only development to yield a permanent and infallible record of the changes in the particular atmospheric movement which it was destined to perpetuate.

This method had been applied at Kew. It had been employed with most admirable results for measuring the constant fluctuations in force and direction of the magnetic needle, and inversely, therefore, in the magnetism of the earth at Greenwich, and at several of the magnetic observatories of the world; and Manuel Johnson carried it to a perfection as a means of recording all the various meteorological changes as no one else had done before. Science has a right to expect that his useful work may be carried on in the future at Oxford, and will always associate the results with the memory of one who was not less loved than he was respected by his scientific compeers. Astronomy has also tried to avail itself of the photographic agency of light. Mr. De la Rue's beautiful photographs of the moon, on a scale never dreamt of till he produced them, proclaim what may be hoped to be effected with such an instrument as Lord Rosse's. But they have also told some unexpected tales of the nature of the moon's surface, by showing that some parts of that surface absorb the photographic rays in a much larger degree than others; and the contrast between the great lava-coulés, if such they be, that radiate so far and wide from the mighty base of Tycho, as compared with the other parts of the surface, give to these photographs a force and a brilliancy

Digitized by Google

quite startling to the observer who knows them only through the telescope. Nor are the minute specks less interesting which Mr. De la Rue's home-made and admirable reflecting telescope has produced for him when turned on the planets. One looks on a collodion-coated plate of glass; and one sees nothing, or perhaps only a speck of seeming dust. Yet a lens of some power reveals in that tiny speck the orb of a planet—a Jupiter with his belts strongly marked, or a Saturn,—and,

> "as he whirls, his steadfast shade
> Sleeps on his luminous ring."

Here, too, new contrasts, produced by unexpected differences in the absorption of light by different parts of the planets, are exhibited; and here, as in the lunar orb, one is tempted to ask the question, How far will the science of another age be in a position to form some bold surmise as to the lithological or other material of these various parts of planets and satellites, by an increased knowledge of the various powers of absorption exercised on the different solar rays by the various materials composing our own globe, the sister to those orbs in space?

Other interesting facts, and needing further experiment for their explanation, have also been exhibited by these astronomical photographs, relating especially to the diminution of the photographic action of the lunar and solar surfaces as the angle of the ray is more oblique.

The microscope, too, has a part to play as an instrument for the photographist, and undoubtedly much here also has to be revealed by the invisible chemical rays which the eye may see but imperfectly; while the results produced by microscopic photography will place within reach of those whose time, whose purses, or whose eyes are unequal to the undertaking of microscopic studies results which can be obtained otherwise only by so large a devotion of time, means, and eyesight.

On the relations of photography to art there is room for much discussion, and probably also for controversy. Photography has driven into the limbo of the unemployed a class of miniature-portrait painters, and they, like the ostlers and innkeepers of the old "roads," who occasionally revenged themselves upon the railways by becoming *employés* upon them, have in many instances joined the motley ranks of photography itself. But that the true artist will not throw down his brush and retreat before the advance of photography into his domain, is evident enough. The utter powerlessness of the chemical pencil of the sun to give the true relations of intensity of colour, the absence from the photograph of that ideal element which is the soul of art, leaves the relation of the photograph to the picture at best

Digitized by Google

only as that of a useful auxiliary to a great result. Even were it possible for the photographist to surmount the former of these difficulties, and to depict not only in correct relative intensity of light and shade but even in actual colour the truth of nature, of which at present there is not the faintest hope, must not the photograph still stand towards the artist's great work as the truest prose description to the imagery of the poem?

The artist need not fear the encroachment of the photographist. He may take the results of the camera,—he has already done so,—and by careful scrutiny of nature thus depicted on a flat surface in such marvellous detail he may learn a new reverence for that patient elaboration of particulars which need not mar his whole, and he may thereby feel that if he never can attain he can yet approach that infinite delicacy of finish which marks the photograph, and that in that approach he is being truer even to the poetry of art than if he were to live in that scorn of detail and emulation of "broad effect" alone, which was born of the consciousness of the limit placed to human action in the production of minutiæ, but has never characterised any really great school of art in any age. M. Le Gray may startle by the instantaneous production of a sea piece, crisped with laughing waves, fringed with the froth and foam of breakers, and overhung with skies of magical reality. But these pictures only startle—the artist feels all their want of true soft harmony, in fact their want of truth; and the public express the same consciousness of their false contrasts by asking if they are indeed moonlight views, or if the heavy clouds are really thunder-clouds. M. Baldus and the Bissons have it all their own way in their colossal views of the new Louvre and the new Tuileries, or of other vast buildings in Paris and elsewhere. But what artist would select such huge masses of masonry alone for the subjects of a picture? To convert them into a picture, he must make them into the background of some living scene, with humanity stamped upon it; or must throw round them the garb of beauty—some tinted gauzy atmosphere won from a setting sun, caught in those transient moments when nature is, as it were, her own poet; or rather when the exuberance of her beauties can overflow and deck in a foreign grace scenes not else beautiful, and so make even such to appeal to the seat of poetic and artistic sympathy, the human heart. De la Motte, and Fenton, and Bedford, and a few others, may strive, and may now and then succeed in catching some happy effect in their camera; but it is where the camera is pointed to some expressly lovely scene at some happy moment; and is it not also due in no small degree—in fact entirely, in so far as such a result is not accidental—to the artistic feeling in the mind of the photo-

Digitized by Google

graphist himself, who knows how to choose and when to take his view? But in fragments of foreground, in those small bits of detail in which the artist has to subordinate his genius to mechanical and patient labour, the photographist is his best colleague; and it is in the careful study of such photographs that he will feel that art has nothing to fear, but much to learn, from her mechanical associate, photography.

The invention of the stereoscope has given a remarkable stimulus to photography. Without photography the stereoscope would have been but a curious apparatus confined to the lecture-room or the drawer of philosophic toys; with photography it has become an article of furniture in every household.

The two images, separately seen by the two eyes, but united into one in the region where optical phenomena pass into the perceptions of the sense, must needs be different. The stereoscope represents such two images, and by an ingenious contrivance brings each before that eye that might have seen it in nature. But when the stereoscope ceases to represent the two pictures as seen from the two points of view represented by the situation of two human eyes, it ceases to be a true representation of the object to a human mind. A stereoscopic picture of Paris, taken from two points of view, each of which is situate on a different tower of Notre Dame, may represent the aspect of a human city as it might be seen by some "vocal Memnon," if he were gifted with eyes: but to him it would seem a toy city; and to human eyes, when thus ingeniously severed from one another by some sixty feet, such a scene must look like a cardboard model; for the several distances and the parallax of every point are entirely displaced from their true positions as seen by any two eyes that could look out from any human head. There is therefore always something startling and always something disappointing in such stereoscopic views. The true effects of the stereoscope are those of more modest pretensions; and it is where the angle is correctly taken, and the stereoscopic influence confined to a foreground and to near objects, that the spell of a solid reality investing the objects looked at is complete; and this pretty philosophic toy becomes the instrument of a beautiful illusion, and possesses a charm of that rare kind that may truly be called a new one.

Digitized by Google

Art. V.—MILL ON LIBERTY.

Liberty. By John Stuart Mill. J. W. Parker, 1859.

Religious Freedom: a Lay Sermon. By Francis William Newman. Holyoake and Co., 1859.

Mr. John Stuart Mill's essay on Liberty is a very melancholy book on a great subject. It is written in the sincere foreboding that the strong individualities of the old types of English character are in imminent danger of being swallowed up in those political and social influences which emanate from large masses of men. It might almost, indeed, have come from the prison-cell of some persecuted thinker bent on making one last protest against the growing tyranny of the public mind, though conscious that his appeal will be in vain,—instead of from the pen of a writer who has perhaps exercised more influence over the formation of the philosophical and social principles of cultivated Englishmen than any other man of his generation. While agreeing with Mr. Mill, as most thoughtful politicians must, in some at least of the most important practical conclusions at which he eventually arrives as to the fitting limits of legislative interference, and the proper bounds to the jurisdiction of that secondary tribunal which we call public opinion, we differ from him widely and fundamentally with regard to the leading assumptions from which he starts, and the main principle which he takes with him as his clue in the inquiry. Indeed, we believe that the whole character and tone of English politics would suffer deeply and permanently were the theoretic basis of Mr. Mill's political philosophy to gain general acceptance. But before we follow him into his political philosophy, we must explain why we think him totally wrong in the most important of his preliminary assumptions.

We differ widely from Mr. Mill as to the *truth* of the painful conviction which has evidently given rise to this essay. We do not for a moment doubt that English "public opinion" is a much more intelligible and homogeneous thing in our own day than it has ever been at any previous time; that it comprehends much fewer conflicting types of thought, much fewer distinctly divergent social tendencies, much less honest and sturdy controversy between diametrical opposites in intellectual theory. Sectarian lines are fading away, political bonds are sundering, even social attractions and repulsions are less marked than they used to be; and to this extent we willingly concede to Mr. Mill that considerable progress is rapidly making towards that universal assimilation of the social conditions of life which he

Digitized by Google

so much dreads. "William von Humboldt," says Mr. Mill, "points out two things as necessary conditions of human development,—freedom, and variety of situations. The second of these two conditions is in this country every day diminishing; the circumstances which surround different classes and individuals, and shape their characters, are daily becoming more assimilated." No doubt this is true; and it is true also, as Mr. Mill says, that "the very idea of resisting the will of the public, when it is positively known that they have a will, disappears more and more from the minds of practical politicians." But to what do these facts point? Mr. Mill believes that they point to an increasing despotism of social and political masses over the moral and intellectual freedom of individuals. To us his conclusion appears singularly hasty, and utterly unsustained by the premises he lays down. If, indeed, Mr. Mill still holds, as many passages in his earlier works would seem to indicate, that there is no such thing as an inherent difference in the original constitution of human minds,—that the varieties in the characters of men are due entirely to the varieties of physical, moral, and social influence to which they are exposed,—then, no doubt, he must argue that the great assimilation of outward circumstances which civilisation necessarily brings, will naturally end in producing a fatal monotony in human character. But without entering into the intricacies of this discussion, for which we have no pretence,—though we suspect it has something to do with Mr. Mill's melancholy anticipations of the extension of a Chinese petrifaction to the western world,—we would suggest that any moral monotony which springs exclusively from the assimilation of social conditions is not only inevitable, but a necessary result of social and political *liberty*, instead of a menace to it.

And what *are* the varieties of character which disappear as the process of social assimilation goes on? Surely *not* individual varieties of character,—varieties, that is, proper to the natural development of an individual character; but simply class types,—the varieties due to well-marked sectional groups,—to widely-severed phases of custom,—to the exclusive occupations of separate *castes*,—in short, to some local or social organisation, the sharp boundary of which is gradually becoming softened or altogether dissolved by the blending and fusing influences of civilisation. That this process has been going on very rapidly during the last century, we believe. But so far from holding, with Mr. Mill, that it is a process fatal to the due development of individualities of character, we conceive that it has not contracted, but rather enlarged, the sphere of individual freedom. The country gentleman stands out no longer in that

Digitized by Google

marked contrast to the tradesman or the man of letters which was observable in the days of Sir Robert Walpole; the dissenter is no longer a moral foil to the churchman; and the different shades of English religious opinion can not any more be mapped out as distinctly as the different counties in a map of England. But what individual freedom has any one lost by the fading away of those well-defined local and moral groups? That there has been a loss of social *intensity* of character in consequence, we admit. The exclusive association of people of the same habits of life and thought has no doubt a tendency to intensify the peculiarities thus associated, and to steep the character thoroughly with that one influence, to the exclusion of all others. But this intensification of local, or social, or religious one-sidedness is as far as possible from the development of that individuality of character for which Mr. Mill pleads so eagerly. Rather must the impressed force of such social moulds or stamps have tended to overpower all forms of individual originality which were not consistent with those special moulds or stamps. No doubt if there were any remarkable element of character in the individual which also belongs specially to the group or caste, we might expect that it would be fostered by such association into excessive energy. But any peculiarly individual element of character, on the other hand, would have been in danger of being overwhelmed. And it is therefore mere assumption to say that because there are now fewer striking varieties of type and class than there were in former generations, there is less scope for individual freedom. The very reverse must be the case, unless the assimilated public opinion of a whole nation be supposed to be more minute, more exigeant and irritating in its despotism, than the sectarian opinion of small local bodies or social castes.

The same explanation applies to that other statement of Mr. Mill's which we have also admitted,—the greater subserviency of statesmen in the present day to any ascertained or even suspected strong bias of political conviction. The true reason is not, in all probability, that statesmen are more cowardly than formerly, but that they cannot command the same unhesitating support from their own party; the individual freedom of politicians is greater, not less, than it was. Parties no longer move in phalanx. Statesmen have to persuade the intellects of their followers, and to satisfy, therefore, a far greater variety of conditions than at any former period. But though this imposes a great restraint on the practical genius of statesmen, Mr. Mill fails to observe that it is a restraint imposed on them, not as individual thinkers or doers, but as *leaders* of the thought and action of others. It tells against, not in favour of,

Digitized by Google

his theory of the gradual suppression of all individuality of character. What was the range of liberty permitted to the individual thought and action of a member of the Tory, or a member of the Whig, party in the last century? If he did not implicitly accept the policy imposed upon him by his leaders, he was "cast out" by one party, and suspected as a turncoat by the other. A more constrained political conscience could scarcely exist than that of the ordinary party-politician of the old type. The tyranny of sectional opinion was far greater than can now be easily imagined. In the present day no man, be he a statesman or a mere private politician, is punished for his individual eccentricities except by his individual isolation. Mr. Gladstone may follow out any vagaries that suggest themselves to his ingenious mind, and he loses nothing but influence by the amusement. Would Mr. Mill wish that statesmen should not only retain this individual liberty to judge for themselves, but the power of constraining a party to support them through all their windings? That would indeed be a strange application of the principle that free scope should be given to every man to follow the bent of his own individual character or genius. The political phenomenon Mr. Mill has pointed out is a clear indication of a diametrically opposite condition of things to that which he seems to infer.

But Mr. Mill may perhaps say that there is much more danger of tyranny from the unchecked power of a single homogeneous body of "public opinion" than there is from the local prejudices or conflicting political sects which formerly contended for the mastery. But this depends entirely on the mode in which this body of public opinion is generated,—whether it arise, as in England, from the genuine assimilation of opposite schools of thought, or, as in the United States, from the mere forcible triumph of a single class-creed, which, in consequence of democratic institutions, is unhappily able to drown by sheer violence the voice of all higher and more cultivated schools of thought. When people come to think more and more alike, simply because the same influences are extending from class to class, and the same set of reasons recommend themselves to the intellects of moderate men in all classes,—when this is the way in which a "public opinion" is formed, it is obvious that the restraint exercised by such public opinion, gathered up as it is from a *very wide social range*, is far less oppressive than the narrower and intenser type of opinion which pervades a single social class or political sect. In the United States, on the other hand, there has been nothing of this gradual assimilation of the different political convictions of different classes. Knowledge and civilising influences have not been the agents in giving predominance to that tyranni-

Digitized by Google

cal type of thought which there goes by the name of "public opinion." The despotism of public opinion in America is not due to the gradual disappearance of local types of opinion and sectional habits of mind, and the natural fusion of political creeds which thus results,—but to the complete political victory which a false constitutional system has given to the largest and most ignorant class of the community over all those whose wishes and judgment were entitled to greater weight. A public opinion which is really only a special class-opinion, accidentally enabled to *silence* all higher elements of thought *instead of* assimilating them, is no fair specimen of that assimilation of view which is confessedly due mainly to the freer interchange of thought between class and class. And yet it is a public opinion formed, as he admits, in the latter fashion, which Mr. Mill thinks so much more menacing to individual liberty than those narrower and straiter forms of class-opinion and conviction which preceded it, and have been absorbed into it.

But while we thus join direct issue with Mr. Mill as to the effect which has been produced on individual liberty by the partial dissolution of those social castes and sectarian types of thought, and the gradual assimilation of the conflicting principles of political parties,—though we believe that never at any previous time were Englishmen at large so free to think and act as they deem right in all important matters, without even the necessity of rendering any account of their actions to the social circles in which they move,—we believe also that the intensity of character lost in this process is sometimes not counterbalanced by the gain in freedom. Mr. Mill has got into inextricable confusion between the strength or intensity of a well-marked type of character encouraged by every social influence to grow *out* prominently in certain directions,—and that individuality which is simply left at liberty to find and follow out its own perhaps not very defined bent. Massiveness and strong outline in character are certainly less promoted by the *laissez-faire* system Mr. Mill recommends than by the predominance of certain tyrannical and one-sided customs, and motives, and restraints, and schools of thought, in the moral atmosphere by which men are surrounded. Mr. Mill is probably right when he complains that the character of the present age is to be "without any marked character;" but for our parts, instead of ascribing it to that exigeant commonplace with which our author wages so internecine a war, we ascribe it in the main to the exactly opposite cause,—the dissolution of various stringent codes of social opinion and custom, which extended the variety of well-marked types of character *at the expense* of the individuality of those who were subject to their influence. We

Digitized by Google

do not, therefore, practically differ from Mr. Mill, widely as we differ from his theory, when we find him saying as to the present state of the public mind—

"Instead of great energies guided by vigorous reason, and strong feelings strongly controlled by a conscientious will, its result is weak feelings and weak energies, which therefore can be kept in outward conformity to rule without any strength either of will or of reason. Already energetic characters on any large scale are becoming merely traditional. There is now scarcely any outlet for energy in this country except business. The energy expended in that may still be regarded as considerable. What little is left from that employment is expended on some hobby; which may be a useful, even a philanthropic hobby, but is always some one thing, and generally a thing of small dimensions. The greatness of England is now all collective: individually small, we only appear capable of any thing great by our habit of combining; and with this our moral and religious philanthropists are perfectly contented. But it was men of another stamp than this that made England what it has been; and men of another stamp will be needed to prevent its decline."

But, holding as we do that Mr. Mill ascribes this dead level of character to a cause nearly the reverse of the true cause, it is not surprising that we differ from him still more widely when he suggests his remedy. Mr. Mill sees no means of stimulating the individual mind to assert its own right to rebel against the tyrannous desire of average men "that all other people shall resemble" themselves. And so he sets himself to persuade average men that, whether with regard to their influence over legislation, or with regard to their share in forming the public opinion of the day, they must steadily resist the temptation of interfering at all to regulate the standard of individual morality, except so far as it touches social rights. This is the one object of his essay. It is not at present half so important, he says, to purify the public conscience, as to break down once and for ever its right to intrude its impressions on individuals. Having long brooded painfully over the evils which are involved in what he regards as the abject deference of individual thought to the "voice which is in the air," Mr. Mill proposes to impose on it a vow of complete silence with regard to all subjects affecting the individual only. He is so anxious to secure free action for human individualities, that he would interdict the "public mind" from expressing any opinion at all on some of the gravest topics that can be submitted to human discussion. He would, in short, emasculate public opinion, in order to remove one principal stumbling-block in the way of those who tremble to assert their own individual convictions in the face of that terrible tribunal.

Digitized by Google

Now we are far from denying that the power of public opinion is often a real and painful stumbling-block to men in the discharge of their duty. It is often hasty, and often ignorant, and often cruel. It sometimes crushes the weak, while it spares altogether the strong and the shameless. It continually "judges according to appearance and not righteous judgment." Its standard is conventional, and is yet generally applied with most rigour where it is, in fact, inapplicable altogether. All this is true, but is certainly no truer of that section of public opinion which regards individual duty than of that which regards social duty; and the remedy does not lie in the artificial proposal to warn Government and Society off the former field altogether. This, however, is exactly the position which Mr. Mill has written his book to defend. "Those who have been in advance of society in thought and feeling," he says, "have occupied themselves rather in inquiring what things society ought to like or dislike than in questioning whether its likings or dislikings should be a law to individuals." Accordingly his essay is an inquiry into the "nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual;" and he does not confine it to investigating the legitimate degree of *State* interference, but, assuming that the principle on which society may claim to interfere with individual self-government by the infliction of social penalties is identical in kind, though not necessarily equally applicable in all cases, with that which warrants legislative interference, he makes it his object to establish that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection," or "to prevent harm to others."

Before we follow Mr. Mill into his able exposition and defence of this principle, we wish to call attention to the new light thrown upon it by the position we have attempted to establish. We have affirmed that the loss of power and intensity which is observable in the typical characters of the present day arises not, as Mr. Mill affirms, from that galling slavery to Commonplace, under the name of Public Opinion, into which men, as it is said, have recently fallen; but from the partial disappearance of those narrow religious, social, and political organisations which formerly gave a more definite outline, and lent a more constant sustaining power, in the shape of strong class-sympathy, to the minds of those who were formed under their influence. But if this be so,—if the change be due rather to the dissolution of habitual social restraints, which, however irksome and oppressive to the young, soon wrap themselves like a second and stronger nature round the minds of the mature,

Digitized by Google

than to any increase of paralysing influence in the mild public opinion of the present day,—then it would seem that the effect of even much stricter codes of social custom, and much narrower sectarian and political prejudices, than any now prevalent tended to sharpen rather than obliterate that edge, and flavour, and intensity which Mr. Mill so much admires and which he misnames "individuality." Suppose for a moment Mr. Mill could have emasculated the various petty "public opinions," confined to special castes and classes, which produced the well-marked characters of the last century, as he would now emasculate the wider and less definite public opinion of modern English society, what would have been the result? The very pith of every strong class-opinion was and is its ideal of *personal* excellence, that touchstone by which it proves the mettle of all its members, and by reference to which it accords its popular judgment of favour or censure. And not only is this true, but it is equally true that no qualities of character enter more deeply into such class-ideals of excellence than those termed by Mr. Mill purely "self-regarding qualities,"—self-possession, courage, firmness, self-restraint,—which, according to our author, should be confined to the most solitary chambers of the imagination. Moreover, once admit that such virtues may and must enter into the very essence of popular standards of character, and you cannot prevent that severity of popular condemnation on the corresponding vices which Mr. Mill regards as a violation of the principle of individual freedom. Suppose, for instance, the country gentlemen of the last century had been induced, in anticipation of Mr. Mill's philosophy, sternly to discourage all tyrannical social prejudices as to the so-called "self-regarding" excellences of the country gentleman; they would of course have discouraged any attempt to affix a social stigma on avarice, meanness, timidity in field-sports, and so forth. But how could this have been possible without destroying entirely the strength, freshness, and clearness of outline, which has engraved that type of character so deeply in the English imagination? We are not now, of course, contending that such class-prejudices are not frequently unjust and injurious in their actual operation; but simply that that breadth and massiveness in the old English types of character which Mr. Mill deplores, was due to the stimulating power of a much *more* trenchant criticism on individual demeanour than now exists, and not to any habit of ignoring entirely the private principles of men's life so long as their duties to others were well observed. In fact, nothing is more remarkable as regards popular English standards of character than a certain undue esteem for purely personal gifts and excellences, and a deeper detestation of those

Digitized by Google

deformities which imply a want of self-respect than even of those which imply a want of respect for others.

And we feel sure that Mr. Mill's proposal to encourage the growth of moral individuality by entirely warning off the conscience of a society or a class from any responsible criticism of this interior world, would have exactly the opposite effect to that which he desires. A strong type of character may be the result either of vivid sympathy or keen collision with the social morality it finds around it; but where the social conscience practically ignores altogether any sphere of universal morality, it will seldom be the case that individual characters will dwell with any intensity upon it. Social indifference will result, not in individual vitality, but in individual indifference. Personal morality, once conscious that society has suspended its judgment, will grow up as colourless as a flower excluded from the light. And if society do not suspend its judgment, it cannot but take leave to mark its approval and disapproval, to praise its heroes and to brand its outlaws. In spite of Mr. Mill's authority, we hold that if his object be, as he states, to encourage the growth of those more bold and massive types of character which he mourns over as extinct, it will be more wise, as well as more practicable, to select as his means to that end the purifying of social judgments from their one-sidedness than to attempt the complete suspension of them on certain tabooed subjects; to seek to infuse into them a truer justice and a deeper charity in estimating individual principles of conduct than to lecture society on the impropriety of passing any opinion on them at all. The "liberty of indifference" is the only kind of liberty which Mr. Mill's proposal would be likely to confer; and that is scarcely consistent with the massive and defined strength of purpose he wishes to restore.

But we have delayed long enough on the threshold of the subject. We cannot avoid touching slightly on Mr. Mill's moral theory, deeply interwoven as it is with his political principles; but we will do so as briefly as possible, and try so far as we can to discuss his social and political theory on its social and political side. Mr. Mill begins by disclaiming, as a utilitarian must, any appeal to abstract right. "I regard utility," he says, "as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being." And the influence of this theory is marked throughout the book. For, starting with the assumption that there is no inward standard of right or wrong, no standard except that which is attained by studying the *results* of conduct, he is led to divide actions into two great classes,—those which affect exclusively

Digitized by Google

or mainly the agents, which are therefore beyond the reach of any external criticism, since no one can know the full consequences except the agent; and actions which affect directly or at least necessarily the interests of others, which can be classified into right and wrong according as they would, if generally permitted, satisfy or interfere with the claims of others.

"Self-regarding faults," he says, "are not properly immoralities; and to whatever pitch they may be carried, do not constitute wickedness: they may be proofs of any amount of folly or want of personal dignity or self-respect, but they are only a subject of moral reprobation when they involve a breach of duty to others, for whose sake the individual is bound to care for himself. What are called duties to ourselves are not socially obligatory unless circumstances make them at the same time duties to others. The term 'duty to oneself,' when it means any thing more than prudence, means self-respect or self-development; and for none of these is any one accountable to his fellow-creatures, because for none of them is it for the good of mankind that he be held accountable to them."

And accordingly he classes cruelty, malice, envy, dissimulation, insincerity, love of domineering, as *immoral;* while cowardice, self-conceit, prodigality, and sensuality, so long as they infringe no one else's rights, he regards as beyond the bounds of morality proper. Their evil, he maintains, depends on their evil consequences. Those consequences, we may think, indeed, that we discern, but they are really experienced only by the mind of the agent; while the evil consequences of the former class of dispositions, on the other hand, are directly measurable by the disturbing influence they exert on the well-being of others. Mr. Mill is consistent, therefore, as a utilitarian, in drawing the broadest distinction between the faults and crimes which aggrieve others, and those which directly hurt, or are supposed to hurt, none except those who commit them.

Mr. Mill is perfectly consistent, we say; but what conscience can acquiesce? Insincerity, he says, is an immorality; lying is a *vice* properly visited by an extreme social penalty; and a fraud is a *crime* properly requited by a severe legal penalty: for lying and fraud invade the rights of others; it is an obligation to others to tell the truth and to act the truth, for others are relying upon you. But sensuality, unless it trespasses on the rights of others, is a "folly," a "want of self-respect," a carelessness as to "self-development;" but, "to whatever pitch" it may be carried, it "does not constitute wickedness." We cannot wonder at this inference from the utilitarian ethics; but we do wonder that so marvellous a result should not stagger any great thinker as to the justice of his pre-

Digitized by Google

mises. The truth is, that Mr. Mill is deceived by the epithet of "self-regarding," which he assigns to the various evil dispositions and actions thus intended to be exempted from social criticism. "Prudence," "self-respect," and "self-development," against which alone he considers them to be transgressions, convey no sense of obligation. A man may sacrifice his own good, indulge little in self-respect, or even have erroneous notions as to the best direction of self-development, without any sense of guilt. None of these phrases in the least describe the origin of the self-reproach which accompanies any kind of evil self-indulgence, moral or sensual. The reason why the term "self-regarding" is so misleading, is not because there is any error in supposing that these things do primarily affect ourselves, but because it seems to indicate that there is a real distinction in kind, which there is not, between the inward moral conditions of this kind of evil disposition or action and those of dispositions or actions which affect primarily others than ourselves. Were Mr. Mill's theory, and the special epithet of "self-regarding" which represents it, a copy of any characteristic inward feeling,—then any habit of self-indulgence, such as that of anger or envy for example, which directly tends to infringe the rights of others, would be separated by a broad moral chasm in our own minds from any other habit of self-indulgence, moral or sensual, which directly tends only to affect our own nature. But this, as Mr. Mill knows, is not the case. The consideration as to whom any guilty act will mainly strike is an *arrière pensée* of the mind, not the least involved in the primary sense of guilt. The classification may be important to the politician, but to the moralist it is utterly artificial. There is as much, and usually far more, sense of a violated claim in the first impurity of thought, which does not seem to go forth into the external world at all, than in the first passionate blow or the first malignant insinuation, which are clear self-indulgences at the expense of another. However important, therefore, may be the distinction between what Mr. Mill calls "self-regarding" faults and what he calls immoralities affecting others in result, it is simply an error to suppose that it is a *natural* distinction, which is recognised by the self-accusing and self-condemning power in man. In both classes of moral evils alike the sting of self-reproach is entirely inward; and is not removed by any demonstration that no *injury* to society has resulted, or is likely to result. Of neither class of evils, again, is it a true account of the matter to say that they lie absolutely within us; for, quite apart from any theological conviction, in both classes of offences alike there is the same sense of transgression of some deep invisible claim on us, which

Digitized by Google

we have no power to release as we can release any mere right of property of our own. We advance these things only for the sake of showing that Mr. Mill's classification is in no sense a classification of wrong dispositions and actions according to the kind, or even degree, of guilt with which they universally impress men, in no sense a moral, but only a political classification. In this, of course, we are at direct issue with Mr. Mill; since, as we have seen, he applies the word "immoral" to the one class, and entirely excludes the other class from any share in that epithet.

But notwithstanding this broad distinction in our ethical theory, it is clear that Mr. Mill's case may be argued, as, indeed, he generally argues it, without any explicit logical reference to his utilitarian creed. For the object of the essay is not to discuss the amount of moral penalty to the individual which different classes of faults ought to entail, but only that portion of it which social custom or political law is justified in *inflicting* for the purpose either of retribution or restraint. Now, even for those who hold that Mr. Mill's classification of "self-regarding" and non-self-regarding faults is morally an artificial one, it is quite a tenable position that the only legitimate ground for social or political penalty ought to be an injury to society or the state. This, accordingly, is Mr. Mill's position; he denies to society the right to intimidate by any intentional combination, even by the combined expression of moral opinion, those whose practice evinces a great divergence of moral principle from the accepted standard, so long as the practice at issue has no bearing on the rights of any other than the offending persons. We have a right, he says, to choose our own society according to our own tastes, and we may therefore avoid the society of a man who offends those tastes; but we have no right to inflict any social penalty upon him by inducing others to do the same, unless his offence be one which threatens the social rights of others.

"It makes a vast difference both in our feelings and conduct," says Mr. Mill, "whether he displeases us in things in which we have a right to control him, or in things in which we know that we have not. If he displeases us, we may express our distaste, and we may stand aloof from a person as well as from a thing that displeases us; but we shall not therefore feel called on to make his life uncomfortable. We shall reflect that he already bears, or will bear, the whole penalty of his error; if he spoils his life by mismanagement, we shall not on that account desire to spoil it still farther; instead of wishing to punish him, we shall rather endeavour to alleviate his punishment by showing him how he may avoid or cure the evils his conduct tends to bring upon him. He may be to us an object of pity, perhaps of dislike, but not of anger or

Digitized by Google

resentment: we shall not treat him like an enemy of society. The worst we shall think ourselves justified in doing is leaving him to himself, if we do not interfere benevolently by showing interest or concern for him. It is far otherwise if he has infringed the rules necessary for the protection of his fellow-creatures, individually or collectively. The evil consequences of his acts do not then fall on himself, but on others; and society, as the protector of all its members, must retaliate on him, —must inflict pain on him for the express purpose of punishment, and must take care that it be sufficiently severe."

Hence if a man should come to live in a society where his life offends the moral principles of all, but yet without injuring them by any invasion of their rights, each may individually avoid him, or remove from his neighbourhood; but any attempt to excite the disapprobation of others,—any attempt to awaken the conscience of the society to any organic sentence like that of the individual conscience on his mode of life,—is an act of social tyranny; and, moreover, prejudges questions in which the social conscience is far more likely to err than the conscience of individuals.

"For," says Mr. Mill, on "questions of social morality the opinion of the public, that is, of an overruling majority, though often wrong, is likely to be still oftener right; because on such questions they are only required to judge of their own interests, of the manner in which some mode of conduct, if allowed to be practised, would affect themselves. But the opinion of a similar majority, imposed as a law on the minority in cases of self-regarding duty, is quite as likely to be wrong as right; for in those cases public opinion means at the best some people's opinion of what is good or bad for other people; while very often it does not mean even that, the public, with the most perfect indifference, passing over the pleasure or convenience of those whose conduct they censure, and considering only their own preference."

This contains, we believe, the substance of Mr. Mill's argument. First, an injury to society is the only legitimate ground of social or political punishment; since any other fault or vice expiates itself, and we can only claim to inflict penalty from that principle of social resentment which is implied in the right to self-protection. Next, if society does transgress this rule at all, the chances are that it will be on the wrong side; since society is some judge of its own interests, but will judge simply by accidental liking or prejudice as to things which do not affect its own interests. Again, the individual is the best judge of his own self-development; and to fetter him by social restraints in what does not affect society is to menace the principle of free self-government. And finally, to the argument that every thing which hurts the inward life and purity of the individual necessarily reacts on society, Mr. Mill replies

Digitized by Google

that he does not deny it, but that the principle of mere authority has had at least an adequate trial during the period of early education, when no one would argue for absolute liberty, even in "self-regarding" acts: but there must be some limit to interference; and if society is to interfere with the self-government of the mature, on the ground only of the infectious nature of all moral evil, there will be no secure sphere of individual freedom at all.

We must keep in mind, in discussing this argument, that Mr. Mill applies it as much to any combination of social opinion which tends to prevent or to render painful the assertion of individual freedom as to political legislation. His test of what such social combination is, seems to be this: any act of which it is the intention to discourage a social heresy of this kind, is a social persecution if the heresy menace the rights of no one but the heretics. Individual disapproval may show itself, as a mere offended taste would show itself; but if you try to put an end to it at all, if you do more than simply withdraw your own countenance, and express your own opinion when natural occasion offers, you are guilty of a social persecution. You may disapprove of gambling or fornication,—you may even perhaps punish those who live by offering inducements to these vices, for that is a social act, which may possibly, at least, trench on the rights of others; but you may not (even socially) punish those who commit them in the exercise of their mature discretion; for the evil falls on themselves, and not (except through the moral infection) on society. You may avoid them yourself; you are bound not to do any thing with the intention of discouraging such a life, except by expressing temperately your individual opinion and regulating your individual conduct. You may not try to excite public censure against these things,—to bring them under the ban of society; as you might a furious temper or an envious and dishonest tongue. In the latter case, the heavier the social penalty you bring down the better. Society must be protected against it. But the evil of "errors" which are visited exclusively on the head of those who commit them ought not to be increased, but if possible alleviated, by lookers-on: and they may not be errors, after all; there is no worse judge than a society on whose rights they do not trench, and which is actuated only by prejudiced "likings" or "dislikings" of its own.

We have done our best to state Mr. Mill's case, where we have not actually used his own words, with the precision and force of thought of which his book gives us so many examples. Certainly his theory does not lose any thing for want of power of exposition. Still it seems to us to fail miserably in furnish-

Digitized by Google

ing even the ground-plan of a sound political philosophy. In the first place, few can read the book without feeling that, with all its elaborate defence of liberty, there is no element so utterly absent, from the first page to the last, as any indication of sympathy with the free play of a national or social character in its natural organic action. Mr. Mill's essay regards "liberty" from first to last in its negative rather than its positive significance. But in that sense in which the very word "liberty" is apt to excite the deepest enthusiasm of which human nature is capable, it means a great deal more than the mere absence of restraints on the individual; it implies that fresh and unconstrained play of national character, that fullness of social life and vivacity of public energy, which it is one of the worst results of such constraint to subdue or extinguish. But any sympathy with a full social life or fresh popular impulses is exactly the element in which Mr. Mill's book is most deficient. The only liberty he would deny the nation is the liberty to be a nation. He distrusts social and political freedom. There is a depressed and melancholy air about his essay in treating of social and political organisms. He thinks strongly that individuals should be let alone, but virtually on condition that they shall not coalesce into a society and have a social or political life that may react strongly on the principles of individual action. Of course in saying this we do not use Mr. Mill's language, nor probably would he accept it as a true description of his doctrine. We only describe the ineffaceable impression it has produced upon us. An aggregate of individually free minds, if they are to be held asunder from natural social combinations by the stiff framework of such a doctrine as Mr. Mill's, would not make in any true or deep sense a free society or a free nation. For any thing this essay contains to the contrary, a nation might be held to possess the truest freedom though there were no indication in it of a common life, no sign of a united society, no vestige of a national will. It is strange that, while Mr. Mill lays so much and such just stress on the liberty of individual thought and expression, he should quite ignore the equally sacred liberty of social and national thought and expression, and even invent a canon for the express purpose of discouraging any action of society at all on topics where he would think it dangerous to the liberty of the individual. In England we should regard the mere absence of interference with individual opinions and actions as a poor sort of liberty, unless there were also due provision for the free play of social opinion, a suitable organ for the expression of those characteristic thoughts which elicit a response from the whole nation, a fit instrument for the timely assertion of

Digitized by Google

England's antipathies and sympathies, hopes and will. If it be in reality a far truer mode of thinking to conceive individuals as members of a society, rather than society as pieced together of individuals, it is certain that true liberty demands for the deepest forms of social thought and life as free and characteristic an expression as it demands for the deepest forms of individual thought and life.

But, says Mr. Mill, what business has society to interfere with actions which do not in any way infringe on the rights of others? 'If the consequences of any act can be shown to be purely individual, not social, then that act must be considered as beyond the range of social criticism.' We reply that, even if the consequences of what Mr. Mill calls "self-regarding errors" can be admitted to be individual only, yet that it is not by the consequences that even the agent himself judges his own action, and therefore not by the consequences that the society of which he is a member can judge it. Both the individual and society feel that the inward principle which is violated in many of these "self-regarding errors" is of infinitely more importance in estimating their relation both to the individual character and to the constitution of society, than the immediate consequences can ever be. The distinction between "self-regarding" consequences and consequences to society is not usually a distinction naturally suggested to the agent, but a distinction taken afterwards on his behalf by astute advocates. And if not a distinction which the individual conscience can always recognise as morally important, then also not a distinction which the social conscience—if a society may be permitted a conscience—can recognise either. Mr. Mill speaks as if those who violate the laws of social morality could properly be conceived as *outside* the social body, as mere invaders of society, and their guilt estimated by the amount of immediate social confusion it tends to produce upon others than themselves. Again, with regard to those whose social guilt or innocence is in dispute, Mr. Mill reasons in the same manner; he thinks of them as external to society, and then asks himself the question, Will the actions of these people in any way disturb the equilibrium of the rest of society? If not, we may retain our opinions as individuals as to the impropriety of what they do, but we are not justified as a society in objecting. Now this is a completely artificial and deceptive mode of thought. Individuals who in any special point reject the moral authority of the society in which they live, are none the less members of that society. Their act is not an invasion, but a rebellion. In other words, it has a double influence, which the aggressive acts of mere invaders never have,—the

Digitized by Google

external and the internal,—the directly injurious results, which, even though they fall exclusively upon their own heads, still fall upon living members of a society who cannot suffer without injury to the whole; and again, the still more important influence of the practical protest put forth by living members of a society against the social principle they have violated. If that principle be one really essential either to social unity or social purity, it is clear that society cannot treat either the immediate ill consequences or the practical protest as if it came from an external source.

If there be any transgressions of social morality which are conceived, as well by the individual as the social conscience, as momentous, not nearly so much because of their immediate results as because they soon extinguish that sense of the inviolable sanctity of social life which is its best and most distinctly religious bond, then surely society, if it have an inward life and constitution and conscience at all, has even more right to express itself in open resentment and displeasure, than in the case of offences which happen to affect the external lot of others of its members. Mr. Mill will not deny that there are offences not trenching on the rights of any other member of society, which yet do more to relax the strength of that spiritual tie which holds society together, than many offences which are direct aggressions upon the rights of others. He can scarcely doubt that the moral dismemberment of Greek and Roman society, for instance, was due in a far higher degree to the impurity which had already spread so fearfully in the age of Plato and of Juvenal than even to the growth of insincerity, dishonesty, and rapacious desires. Yet because offences of the former class are, in the first instance, sins only against that hidden conscience, or rather that overshadowing power, which constitutes the true spiritual bond of society, while offences of the latter class are also visibly traced in unjust violence or defrauded claims, Mr. Mill would call an organic expression of social displeasure towards sins of the one class a tyranny, and towards sins of the other class a needful and justifiable resentment. It is, we suppose, because Mr. Mill denies the existence of any moral standard of action, except consequences, in the individual, that he is also unwilling to admit the existence of any inward social principles apart from consequences against which members of a society can offend. Were it not so, he would see as clearly as we see that the danger of severing the spiritual roots of social purity and unity is the true danger to society, and needs even more sedulous and organised protest in cases where there is no one person specially interested in raising it, than even in those cases where some

Digitized by Google

one is directly wronged, and therefore certain to call in the aid of others in his own behalf. Social liberty, or liberty for the free play of social character, is quite as sacred as individual liberty; and it cannot exist at all if the deepest principles which form that character are to be kept in abeyance out of respect for the liberty of those who infringe them. How far the individual should be compelled, *otherwise* than by the free expression of social opinion, to respect such moral laws, is quite another question, which involves a large class of new considerations. But to propose that social opinion should spontaneously put itself under unnatural restrictions, with regard to principles which go to the very root of social life, in deference to individual liberty, is to ask that society should renounce its best impulses, in order that individuals may indulge their worst.

We shall not, we trust, be understood to deny that such a thing as social tyranny—quite apart from legislative enactment—is very common and very dangerous. No doubt society often does interfere with the proper sphere of private individual liberty. We only maintain that Mr. Mill's principle altogether fails properly to distinguish the two spheres, and practically denies any inward life and character to society altogether; turning it into a mere *arbiter* between individuals, instead of regarding it as an organised body, in the common life of which all its members partake. Mr. Mill thinks society a competent judge of its own *external interests;* but that its moral likings and dislikings are mere tyrannical sentiments, which it will impose at pleasure on any unfortunate minority within its control. No doubt societies, like individuals, are disposed to bigotry. No doubt majorities will at times strive to impose their coarser tastes and poor commonplace thoughts on minorities, instead of desiring to know and try the principle opposed to theirs. But what is the true check upon social bigotry? According to Mr. Mill, the only guarantee against it is to erect, by common consent, every individual human mind into an impregnable and independent fortress, within the walls of which social authority shall have no jurisdiction; the functions of the latter being strictly limited to arbitrating questions at issue between all such independent lords, and prohibiting mutual encroachments. Now we do not deny that such a total withdrawal of individual duty and morality from the circle of social questions might secure against bigotry; but at what expense? At the sacrifice, we believe, of that mediating body of social faith and conviction which connects together the more marked individualities of different minds, interprets them, and renders them mutually intelligible and useful,—at the cost of that social unity of spirit which alone renders the diversity of indi-

Digitized by Google

vidual gifts capable of profiting by each other. Mr. Mill's essay may be said to be one long *éloge* on individuality—its importance in itself, and its paramount importance to society. This we accept as strongly as Mr. Mill. But individuality may suffer in either of two ways: from the too great rigour or from the too great looseness of the social bond,—from the tyrannical domination of custom and commonplace over the individual; or from that paralysis of social life which permits individual modes of thought and conduct to diverge too widely for mutual influence and aid. What is it that really makes strong individualities of character and thought so important to society, but their real power of increasing the moral and intellectual experience of general society? And how could this be, if they were not kept constantly in living relation with general society by the sense of social authority over them? It is this moral authority exercised by social opinion, and this alone, which obliges the innovator to remember, and, if he can, to appreciate, the body of diffused social conviction, even while modifying, deviating from, and expanding it. People of strong one-sided individualities are always in danger of losing their full and fair influence on society; nay, of losing even the full advantage of their special characteristics, from want of adequate sympathy with the society which they wish to influence. For example, it is not easy to avoid the conviction that Miss Emily Brontë had all, and more than all, the *specialities* of genius which gave her sister Charlotte so great and deserved a celebrity, but fell short of her sister in real artistic power owing to the excess of these qualities, or rather to deficient sympathy with the more homely tastes and interests which gave the latter a larger common ground with the world she was to address.

And what is true of intellectual characteristics is far more uniformly true of moral characteristics. Those who ignore entirely the restraints of the code of social morality under which they live, are never likely to deepen, widen, or elevate it. Moral heretics may often render a great service to the world, but only where they feel acutely where it is that their creed diverges from that of the world, and on what grounds it thus diverges; only if they recognise the moral authority of the social creed to the full so far as it is sound, and dispute it on the one point on which they have tested its unsoundness. Mere groundless eccentricity,—which Mr. Mill, with less than his usual good sense, goes into a special digression to extol,—has more effect, we believe, in aggravating the social bigotry of Commonplace, and rendering men suspicious of all genuine individuality, than any other influence. Proper individuality is any thing but eccentricity; it is a development—one-sided perhaps, but still a deve-

Digitized by Google

lopment—of convictions and characteristics the germs of which are common to all men. If social conviction on all questions of individual conduct and morality could be struck dumb, so as to leave individuals to themselves, moral heresies would no doubt multiply more freely; but by losing their intimate relations with the wider experience of society and with the broader convictions of the social conscience, they would not only lose a certain restraining and tempering influence, but also the power which that greater breadth and temperateness gives of reacting upon society with regard to all points on which social opinion has passed a false or narrow and inadequate verdict.

If now Mr. Mill asks us what we regard as the true check upon that oppressive social bigotry which so often gives rise to weakness and moral cowardice on the one hand, and to unjust social excommunications on the other, we should reply, that there is the same check on the tyrannical treatment by society of what he calls "self-regarding" heresies as there is on similar social tyrannies towards what he admits to be justly punishable social immoralities. Society is apt to be quite as despotic, and the results of that despotism are apt to be quite as disastrous in inspiring moral cowardice and the arrogant spirit of excommunication, in the latter class of cases as in the former. Cases of real or fancied dishonesty, insolence, breach of faith, pride, are quite as often misjudged and over-punished as are those cases of "self-regarding error" with which, in Mr. Mill's estimation, society has nothing to do. That society is an imperfect judge of right and wrong, is true enough. Is it likely to improve under the exhortation to give up thinking of right and wrong altogether, and to calculate instead the tendency of human actions to produce external social disturbance? Is it likely to be more charitable and less unjust when told that it must no longer try human action by a practical human standard; that it must take pains to distinguish between actions with evil social consequences and actions with evil individual consequences only; and while disregarding the latter altogether, it should administer the unwritten law of social instinct upon the former with all the deterrent rigour it can command? When we look Mr. Mill's proposition directly in the face, it is impossible not to wonder that with so deep a despondency as to the inward spirit of English society he should combine so strangely sanguine an estimate of the power of theory. He thinks that if society would but confess that it has no social right to set up any concrete standard of moral duty, if it could but be persuaded to confine its criticisms to that abstract idea of his, "social man," and to plead absolute incompetence to deal with the "self-regarding" duties of human life,—that then individual

Digitized by Google

minds would begin to play freely, and health to return to the whole social system. We believe, on the contrary, that if Mr. Mill's prescription could be carried out at all, which it cannot, the result would be exactly opposite. The individuality of individual life would be paralysed by this artificial indifference on the part of Society to its proceedings. The social morality of social life would lose all depth and seriousness by being thus unnaturally dissevered from the deeper judgments of the individual conscience. Social morality, striving to judge of actions simply by their effects on the rights of others, and ostentatiously excluding all the natural canons of moral criticism, would become arbitrary, conventional, formal. In proportion as it relaxed its hold on the individual conscience, it would become pharisaic in its anxiety about the rights of others. Professing to judge men only by this rigid test-formula, 'What is the net social result of your action?' instead of by any natural human conception of good or evil, social morality would wander farther and farther from the natural principles of justice, and soon substitute a *doctrinaire* social bigotry of its own, in the place of that moral bigotry in judging of individual conduct from which Mr. Mill hopes to redeem it. Indeed, Mr. Mill's own writings contain sufficient indications of this risk. There is one social offence of which he writes with sustained and profound indignation, in a tone sometimes rising to the eloquence of patriotic resentment, sometimes to the judicial severity of the bench. That offence is early marriage on the part of men unprovided with certain means of supporting a family,—the social crime of contributing to over-population. He speaks of this repeatedly in his various works as the offence which society ought to resent with its bitterest social penalties; nay, which the law itself should punish as soon as social opinion is ripe for such a consummation. We do not wish to take moral thoughtlessness of any sort, or the injustice arising from thoughtlessness, under our protection; but it is important to point out practically the sort of moral result in which Mr. Mill's doctrine issues. Impurity of heart and life, and all those forms of it which avenge themselves primarily and externally on the heads of the individual offenders alone, he holds that society, as such, has no business to interfere with,—no right by social penalties of any sort to discourage or resent. But on the imprudence,—or, let us admit at once, the injustice,—of hasty and improvident marriage he would bring down, if he could, the ban of something like social excommunication.* Yet with which class of evil has the social conscience the most real and intimate con-

* Political Economy, vol. i. p. 445; Essay on Liberty, p. 194.

Digitized by Google

cern? Mr. Mill's essay is in many parts a continuous wail over the tendency of the individual mind to succumb to the conventional prejudices of a social creed; but could any better illustration be required than we have here given that his own theory, if accepted, would lead to a yoke of conventional social morality far heavier and more oppressive to the individual conscience than that which he conceives to be already almost beyond endurance? Thus to supersede social morality by intellectual formula will prove, we take it, a harder task than to regenerate it by the natural method of moral influence. Mr. Mill is very hard upon those who try to change the "likings or dislikings" of society instead of to convince its reason. But few caprices of social liking or disliking could be conceived less reasonable than the intellectual caprice which he wishes society to adopt as its rule in dealing out its discouragements, its censures, and its bans; for he asks society to neglect, on principle, the cancer at its heart, while he would have it amputate without scruple the slightly injured limb.

Mr. Mill is well aware that the principal recommendation of his social theory to ordinary minds is not likely to consist in its inherent strength half so much as in its inviting logical affinity to one very important and very direct application, which English thought has already, on other grounds, heartily accepted; we mean the perfect liberty of individual opinion, and the evil of any sort of social excommunication of mere heresy. So well aware is he that the persuasiveness of his theory will lie mainly in its seeming adaptation to yield this already established conclusion, that the ground we have hitherto disputed with him, though it is the key of his position, is not that which he takes the most or the first pains to fortify. On the contrary, he trusts mainly to the indirect argument we have indicated. Here, he wishes his readers to feel, is a principle which is recognised by the highest and noblest minds, which is deeply ingrained in English politics, and is every day more generally acceptable in English society,—the principle that men's honest individual opinions and beliefs ought not to subject them to any persecution, explicit or indirect, political or social. Accordingly he spends the first half of his essay on reconsidering this principle, and developing it beyond its already familiar political aspects into its purely social bearings. He sees that there is much chronic social intolerance left which ought to be eradicated, and he perhaps justly thinks his theory of society well adapted to educe an extension of this principle, to prove the inadmissibility of those social excommunications which religious heresy still frequently draws down. If society has no further right than to

Digitized by Google

protect itself against practical transgressors of social duties and claims, how clear that it has no right to stir up any sort of social resentment or arm prejudice against a man who has simply used his own individual liberty of thought to form his own individual convictions! And what theory of society but that of self-protection would be likely to leave the sphere of individual thought so inviolable? How closely connected are individual opinions on religious or moral matters with the individual conscience! and if we are once to admit that public opinion about right and wrong has any thing at all to do with the sphere of government, or even with the exercise of social authority, how can we prevent endorsing all sorts of claims to punish men for their opinions? Only if we admit that there is an absolute sphere of individual liberty which society is not warranted, on any pretence whatever, in infringing, can we feel sure that we have a theory of society in perfect harmony with this important principle.

Thus, as we believe, or in some similar strain, Mr. Mill has reasoned with himself. Unfortunately, however, for his social theory, he ought to separate the right to form individual convictions from the right to *propagate* them. The two rights, he freely concedes, are practically inseparable; yet the two certainly do not bear the same relation to his social theory. So long, indeed, as the convictions formed have no direct bearing on the admitted rights of others,—so long as they are religious, or belong only to the "self-regarding" class of moral duties,—so long his theory would justify their free propagation as well as their free formation. But once let them have a revolutionary tendency in their bearing on social life,—once let their adoption have evil consequence which would fall primarily on *others*,—and he feels at once that the "self-protecting" theory of society would justify both government and social opinion in interfering to punish or to excommunicate the propagandist. Mr. Mill does not attempt to get over this difficulty. He knows that government ought to interfere only with evil actions, not with dangerous opinions. He knows that social feeling itself ought to draw a broad distinction between evil actions and those opinions which merely encourage and impel to evil actions; but his theory will not admit this distinction. If "self-protection" be the duty of society, it ought surely to discourage in the germ those views which endanger its existence, and not to wait till the risk has borne fruits of serious evil.

Mr. Mill is obliged to draw a distinction between opinions so expressed "as to constitute a positive instigation to some mischievous act," and abstract opinions with the same tendency: "An opinion that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor, or that

Digitized by Google

private property is robbery, ought to be unmolested when simply circulated through the press; but may justly incur punishment when delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn-dealer, or when handed about by the same mob in the form of a placard."

With this doctrine we entirely agree; but if it be taken absolutely, what does it really amount to except a complete abandonment of Mr. Mill's own theory, and a virtual admission of our position that, after all, it is the judgment of the social conscience, and not any technical formula derived from a right to protect itself against external disorders, which justifies society in the infliction of political and social penalties, and the expression of social resentment? For if, as Mr. Mill contends, society is the best and only proper judge of what is inimical to its own interests, and is bound to watch over and protect them without regard to the principles of individual morality involved, how can he regard as any thing but positively praiseworthy its attempt to stifle at once,—if not by law, at least by the expression of stern displeasure on the part of the public,—all teaching that would directly tend to subversive actions? On the principle that prevention is better than cure,—on the principle on which society engages police to watch the dangerous classes, as a wiser measure than calling in the military to defeat them when once in force,—no one can deny that to brand the propagation of opinions dangerous to the constitution of society with social opprobrium would be a much safer measure than to punish those who act them out. If an opinion is advocated "that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor," and it is possible, by uniformly frowning upon and, if needful, excommunicating the advocates of such subversive opinions, to prevent the assemblage of that unruly mob before the corn-dealer's door altogether, how much more merciful this course would be than to let the doctrine reach that degree of influence and then punish its propounders! Mr. Mill makes reply, as we understand him, that he admits this consequence; that, strictly speaking, society has the right to guard itself against revolutionary opinions, even while only abstract; but that it wisely waives this right for the chance which always exists that by habitually listening to all abstract opinions, it may occasionally be induced to reconsider its own view, and give in its adhesion to what it at first erroneously deemed subversive doctrine. In short, society, he thinks, properly runs the risk of delaying for a while to protect itself against many really dangerous opinions which may gain ground and become practically threatening, in order that it may protect itself against the alternative and worse risk of overlooking the truth contained in some seemingly but not really dangerous opi-

Digitized by Google

nions. This is, however, practically leaving it to the discretion of society whether in any given case it regards the practical risk or the chance of new light as the greater. The right of self-protection always exists; and if it is waived, it is only because society does not fear so much as it hopes. Mr. Mill, on his theory, could not charge French society, for instance, with any inconsistency, looking to the past, in prohibiting or punishing the propagation of such doctrines as Proudhon's, that "property is robbery." The chance of new light from such doctrines is infinitely small. Socialism has had its trial, and been condemned. The risk of social commotion from such doctrine is proved by experience to be great; if society elects to excommunicate such teachers, and crush the almost certain evil in the bud, society is quite justified on Mr. Mill's theory. It prefers to protect itself against the physical danger rather than against the possible ignorance which free discussion might remove. It regards the risk of the former as very great, and the risk of the latter as infinitely small. Accordingly political and social intolerance is certainly clearly admissible,—on the theory that the only duty of society is to protect itself,—in the case of all opinions which seem to threaten, in the opinion of the majority, much more social danger than their investigation could possibly bring new light. After all, then, Mr. Mill's doctrine does not exclude considerations as to the degree of social unanimity against an opinion, and the nature of the apprehensions excited by it, from the problem as to the right or wrong of exercising tolerance towards it. "Self-protection" is a duty which is found to require much judgment; and different lines of conduct are justified by it in different countries and under different social conditions.

Moreover, Mr. Mill's theory does not only leave large room for social and political intolerance, but in those cases where it does admit intolerance at all, it admits it in the highest degree. Suppose society convinced—say by bitter experience, such as that of revolutionary France—that it had far more danger to apprehend from the spread of exciting doctrine on any particular subject than enlightenment to look for from the discussion, it will be warranted in using the most effective social measures for its extinction. That is but poor "self-protection" that only half does its work. The earlier the blow is struck, the more entirely theoretic the stage in which the social heresy is extinguished, the farther it is from any actual criminal intention at the time, the better. So far from waiting till the mob is before the corn-dealer's door, according to the true principle of self-protection, society would raise a hue and cry against the social heretic when first he began to intimate that to destroy granaries of corn in order to raise the price of the remainder is a selfish and un-

Digitized by Google

principled act. Once let the teaching take the form of a popular cry,—once let selfish ends become interwoven with it,—and it might be too late. The theory of self-protection, then, will not only justify intolerance to social heresies in given cases, but in those cases will justify it at the point farthest removed from practical action; while the intellectual error, and that alone, is the danger to be feared.

Now let us compare these results of Mr. Mill's theory as to the limits of social authority with what we may call the natural theory, which gives the social conscience both liberty and right to express itself strongly on all moral points sufficiently simple, and sufficiently clear of individual elements, to be within its comprehension. We maintain that this, no doubt very commonplace and practical, but not the less, we believe, true, mode of looking at the duty and province of society, will be found to justify Mr. Mill's candid but not very self-consistent admission,—that merely abstract opinions tending to mischievous social acts ought to be absolutely unfettered and free, whereas "opinions so expressed as to constitute a positive instigation to those acts" should be punishable as social offences,—far better than his own theory. Once make it the very essence of the law of right acknowledged by society to take measures for mere self-protection, and we cannot refuse it the privilege of judging how that end will be best accomplished. Mr. Mill says it is the only guarantee for the soundness of a practical principle that its theory should be always entirely open to attack, and yet should have endured uninjured all such attacks as may have been directed against it. But make self-protection your only rule, and society can scarcely be denied the right to judge for itself in this matter, especially after winning two or three expensive and exhausting victories over such adversaries. The theory of self-protection will not admit account to be taken of individual purposes or motives, except as an element in the probable danger to society. A very good and innocent fanatic, dealing in abstract opinions only, may be very dangerous; and a very guilty and mischief-meaning scoundrel, with selfish ends close in view, may choose his ground so ill as to be very harmless. In this case, according to Mr. Mill's theory, society would be bound to punish the former, even though his instruments were abstract opinions only, but likely to work powerfully; and to ignore the latter, even though his opinions were "so expressed as to constitute a positive instigation to mischief," but yet were inefficient opinions, likely to have no practical effect. But once let us see that society will not really protect itself best by making self-protection the one end and aim of its law of right,—once admit that if it act on the natural principles of individual justice, and strive to judge mischievous

Digitized by Google

acts by the degree of individual ill-intent they involve rather than by the risk to itself, it will really be better protected than if it think only of self-protection,—and it will at once follow that opinions should never be judged purely by their mischievous tendencies,—should never be punishable, in short, socially or politically, except when in the closest possible relation to the acts they seem to justify. To take Mr. Mill's own illustration: so long as the doctrine that "corn-dealers are starvers of the poor" is a mere theory, it may have risen from a thousand sources of intellectual and involuntary error,—from confused political economy, confused theories of society, and so forth; but no sooner is the actual deed of violence which that doctrine would justify vividly present to the eye in a real individual case than we feel assured, in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, that any man who had not the mind of a common robber would shrink back from the consequences of his own theory; while the hundredth man, though possibly an innocent fanatic, cannot expect to have the law made for his exceptional case. This is the only real distinction between an abstract opinion and an opinion giving birth to an action. It may be quite possible for an innocent opinion to justify a very criminal action; but scarcely so if the two are brought into such immediate relation of cause and effect that the mind of the merely speculative thinker fully realises all the elements present to the mind of the criminal doer. We maintain, therefore, that the just ground for permitting the free propagation of such abstract opinions as, if they took the concrete shape of recommending specific actions, would be justly punished, is that in the one case they often involve no kind of guilt at all, but merely intellectual confusion and want of imaginative power; while in the latter case, if the social judgment be not itself utterly distorted, they can rarely be free from a deep stain of guilt. But on his own theory of the merely self-protective right of society, Mr. Mill would be obliged, we maintain, to make large and important exceptions to the very just principle he lays down with respect to the difference between mischievous opinions and "opinions so expressed as to form absolute instigations" to mischievous acts.

We hold, then, that Mr. Mill's own theory does not permit nearly so clear a distinction between opinions and actions as is absolutely necessary for any true guarantee of social tolerance. Measure Wrong by the mere amount of tendency to imperil the admitted rights of others, and you cannot draw any satisfactory distinction between the intellectual and the practical tendencies which imperil them. Measure it, on the other hand, by a practical standard, the purpose and circumstances of the wrong-doer, and there is the broadest distinction between a theory and an

Digitized by Google

instigation, — an impersonal conclusion of the intellect, and a practical recommendation which realises the whole actual significance of the injurious theory. Of course, if what we have called the natural theory of social right be the true one,—though the indignation of society ought to fall only on such teachings as come into the very closest relations with evil acts,—there is no reason why it should not fall as much on teaching of this sort when it corrupts only the moral conduct, as when it tends to invade the social rights of others. Mr. Mill's doctrine would not only exclude the *legal* punishment of preachers of such socialist doctrines, for instance, as advocate the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes,—for there we should agree with him, not because we deny government the right to interfere, but because, in England at least, we doubt if society would not have far more power to interfere efficiently by social means only,—but it would prohibit any manifestation of social feeling against them as an intolerance. We hold, on the other hand, that there can be no greater offence against the true principles of liberty than to deny society the right, admitted to individuals, of expressing the convictions of the social conscience freely and strongly on all subjects of this kind on which the social conscience can adequately judge.

How, then, Mr. Mill will ask, do we provide against that religious and social intolerance which, as his own essay most eloquently shows, is still so deadly a poison in English society? If we contend that the social conscience should be as free to judge and speak as the individual conscience, how are we to protest with any force against that miserable bigotry which *always* professes to speak from the impulses of a pure moral zeal, and very generally really is closely connected with the moral nature? So long as a social prejudice or exclusive piece of bigotry can assert that it is grounded in moral feeling, we shall have no means of assailing it except on its most hardened side;—we shall not, like Mr. Mill, be able to attack it in the rear; on the ground, not that it is wrong, but that it is out of place, and interfering in a region where it has no proper title to interfere at all. If a sabbatarian-minded society, for example, wishes to impose its own sanctimonious rules on a protesting minority, Mr. Mill would set to work to oppose it, not by contesting the right to interfere on this particular subject, but by trying to establish a general canon of social right, which, if accepted, would on examination be found to deny the power to dictate on this question. We, on the other hand, could only fight the battle separately on each particular point as it occurred. We admit fully this inferiority, if it be a real inferiority, in the advantage of our position; but seeing that all the triumphs of

Digitized by Google

social and political tolerance have been practically gained in this way, and not in Mr. Mill's,—have been gained, we mean, by convincing society or the State that men of the highest moral and social virtue have differed in their religious or biblical tenets, and that therefore the conscience of society could not be said to have determined these points at all,—we exceedingly doubt the inferiority of our position to Mr. Mill in respect to any practical advantage. Mr. Mill instances the fundamental questions of the belief in God and a future state, and intimates that the conscience of a vast majority would stoutly affirm it an immorality to reject these beliefs—in fact, a symptom of moral deformity. It may be so; but we strongly believe that, if it be so, the way to convince society that it is in error is, not to deny that its conscience has any right to judge of individual conduct, but to exhibit the many great complexities of intellectual constitution which have prevented, and do prevent, men of pure life and stainless integrity from accepting these faiths; and to point out, moreover, that one of the greatest obstacles in their way is the uncharitable excommunication to which society in its pharisaism dooms them. This would be a victory over the social conscience gained by an appeal to the social conscience, and therefore, we believe, would be much more likely to be firm and permanent than one gained by merely persuading society—which it would be hard to do—that it has no concern with the individual principles of life and action, as such, at all. We always mistrust these indirect victories over either individual or social opinion. The social conscience, like the individual conscience, will not submit to be merely out-manœuvred; it takes the liberty, after all, of forming its judgments, with reference to the rights of a question, on those rights. The best answer to Mr. Mill on this point will be found in the admirable lecture of Professor Newman which we have placed with his own book at the head of this article. No one can have felt more keenly than Professor Newman how grave an evil the narrow prejudices of the social conscience may be;—how injurious, first and mainly to the intolerant Society, next, and also grave, to the sufferer from social bigotry. Yet no one could have expressed more truly and profoundly the ground which it is wisest to take in struggling to remove this narrowness of social opinion; no one could have explained more ably why it would be foolish as well as unjust to deny the social conscience its just jurisdiction over individual life, and how much more hope there is of undermining social bigotry by enlarging the view and rectifying the judgment of society than by attempting to dispute its right to interfere in individual morality at all.

One of the most striking passages in Mr. Mill's essay ap-

Digitized by Google

pears to us to tell very strongly against his own view. No more graphic picture of the predominant modern phases of social bigotry could well be given than Mr. Mill gives in the following words:

"But though we do not now inflict so much evil on those who think differently from us as it was formerly our custom to do, it may be that we do ourselves as much evil as ever by our treatment of them. Socrates was put to death; but the Socratic philosophy rose like the sun in heaven, and spread its illumination over the whole intellectual firmament. Christians were cast to the lions; but the Christian church grew up a stately and spreading tree, overtopping the older and less vigorous growths, and stifling them by its shade. Our merely social intolerance kills no one, roots out no opinions; but induces men to disguise them, or to abstain from any active effort for their diffusion. With us heretical opinions do not perceptibly gain, or even lose, ground in each decade or generation; they never blaze out far and wide, but continue to smoulder in the narrow circles of thinking and studious persons among whom they originate, without ever lighting up the general affairs of mankind with either a true or a deceptive light. And thus is kept up a state of things very satisfactory to some minds, because, without the unpleasant process of fining or imprisoning any body, it maintains all prevailing opinions outwardly undisturbed, while it does not absolutely interdict the exercise of reason by dissentients afflicted with the malady of thought. A convenient plan for having peace in the intellectual world, and keeping all things going on therein very much as they do already. But the price paid for this sort of intellectual pacification is the sacrifice of the entire moral courage of the human mind. A state of things in which a large portion of the most active and inquiring intellects find it advisable to keep the genuine principles and grounds of their convictions within their own breasts, and attempt, in what they address to the public, to fit as much as they can of their own conclusions to premises which they have internally renounced, cannot send forth the open, fearless characters, and logical, consistent intellects who once adorned the thinking world."

This is most true and most graphic. But how does it tell on the theory that social opinion ought not to interfere in any way with individual life and conduct? that if individual morals or creeds excite social resentment, that resentment is neither to be expressed nor fought against, but rather to be suppressed or burked in conformity with the canon that social opinion should not meddle with such matters at all! Why, Mr. Mill's theory of an ideal public mind seems to us to be exactly what should lead to the state of things described above. If Society is to be made to feel that it is to have no social judgment, no social conviction, no social likings and dislikings, on individual morals and creeds at all,—if the social mind is simply to *abstain* from all corporate acts of conviction which might carry the weak along with it, or

Digitized by Google

intimidate the cowardly into base compliance,—how could we have any thing but "heresies smouldering in the narrow circle of studious persons among whom they originate"? What is it that makes opinions "blaze out far and wide," and "light up the affairs of mankind with either a true or a deceptive light," except a profound conviction on the part of the social conscience that it *is* concerned in those convictions, and *has* a real relation to them, either in the way of cordial belief or of as cordial rejection? If Mr. Mill had looked for a theory of society which, if adopted, might have the effect of prolonging so undesirable a condition of things, he could not have invented any so excellently adapted to that purpose as his own. It is the belief that society, as society, has a common life, liable to be vitally influenced by the acceptance or rejection of religious and moral faiths; it is this true belief that favours those hearty battles between conflicting sections which are so much better and healthier a sign of the times than "smouldering" orthodoxies and equally smouldering heterodoxies. If, as Mr. Mill believes, society has no such common life, it is impossible that the enunciation of truths or errors could stir up in it these elevated moods of social emotion. If common opinions are to be debarred all active expression, all signs of either approval or censure, for fear they may subdue the cowardly or silence the timid, it is impossible that the conflict between truth and error can be any thing but a weak and dropping fire carried on by individual marksmen. Mr. Mill uniformly advocates an unsocial conception of liberty which exactly corresponds to the condition of things he so eloquently condemns.

We have not been able to enter, as we had intended, on the discussion which Mr. Mill's book raises, though only as a secondary question,—the true limits of political as distinguished from social authority. There are, of course, many considerations which would limit the interference of positive law with "self-regarding" actions, which do not apply in any way to the authoritative influence exerted by social opinion, custom, and faith. Of these, one of the most important is the absence of any *natural* prosecutor in the case of offences which do not infringe the rights of others, and the natural indisposition of English law to lend any sanction to mere informers. Another great limitation on the interference of government with other classes, as well as with this class, of offences, is the general and healthy conviction that our criminal law should exact something *less*, not only than the average moral *standard*, but even than the average moral *practice* of the community, while social opinion may, and generally does, represent something either quite up to the average or even above it. It is by no means desirable that law should

Digitized by Google

be nearly up to the level of a nation's conscience; were it so, indeed, criminals would be rather the rule than the exception. And besides this, beyond a certain point conscience ceases to concern itself with actions and broad purposes, and goes into those complex shades of motive where law neither can nor ought to follow it, and yet where the influence of the social conscience can sometimes penetrate with effect. All these and many other considerations limit the proper sphere of legal authority very closely; and yet not even as regards this much more limited sphere is Mr. Mill's theory at all likely to be absolutely admitted. The worst and most unnatural crimes which are punished in England, which certainly need the brand of legal as well as social infamy, would go untouched if his doctrine, that purely self-regarding actions are beyond the authority of society, were to be admitted.

But we must conclude. We have purposely kept in view as the point under discussion, the limit of *social* rather than of legal authority, because it was the characteristic feature of Mr. Mill's book to raise this larger question. Indeed, the points on which we differ from him most profoundly affect the essential principles of political philosophy; which they could not do if they merely determined the proper limits of legal interference, instead of the limits of "the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual." We have sought to show that, notwithstanding his running eulogium, Mr. Mill has missed something of true respect for individual liberty, exactly because he has systematically and profoundly underrated the significance and value of social liberty. In his effort to guard an absolute sphere of liberty for the individual, he would put most unwarrantable constraints on that social freedom which is quite as necessary to all mighty and rapid currents of human faith. Mr. Mill maintains, in fact, that every individual mind should be surrounded with an element that is a perfect non-conductor of social authority; a private sphere, from which social life should be jealously excluded. We maintain that this would be as fatal to the due development of individualities as to the due growth of social and national life. We hold that society has, and ought to have, a common life, which sends its pulses through every individual soul. If St. Paul's teaching, that different men are all "*members*" of one body, appears to represent insufficiently the independence of moral and individual character, yet the opposite conception of society as a mere aggregate of independent units implies a much more delusive and much commoner mistake. There *is* a common life and common conscience in society; and every individuality soon becomes a mere loose atom of eccentricity which does not feel, acknowledge, and show

Digitized by Google

clear indications of its influences. The man who is most willing to open his mind to the stirrings of social faith and social conscience, is the one whose individual thought and powers will react most strongly upon society. Mr. Mill, in trying to exclude the influences of the one, has been unconsciously exerting himself to famish and paralyse the other.

Art. VI.—MORLEY'S MEMOIRS OF BARTHOLOMEW FAIR.

Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair. By Henry Morley. Chapman and Hall, 1859.

We have long been of opinion that the by-ways of history are nearly as instructive as its highways, and often more entertaining. Over wars ending in hollow truces, over treaties which do not bind, over marriages which do not unite nations, over political rivalries and polemical feuds, it is often lawful to slumber; and many persons of good judgment confess their inability to read history with any interest or satisfaction, because, if even a squabble in a parish vestry be seldom, if ever, truly reported in the county newspaper, it is unreasonable to look for truth, or indeed for much probability, when we read of the actions or the motives of men in the great theatre of the world. The highways of history too often lead to Doubting Castle; in its by-ways, on the contrary, nothing short of minute investigations and graphic presentation of facts can render a record of them endurable. The *minutiæ* of the theme will not poise and buoy themselves up like the annals of war and peace, of intrigue and negotiation; they must bring their own warrant, or they will not be readable. Again, the vouchers on which they rest are often more to be relied on than the documents for graver matters,—they are composed for the most part of facts and observations made and recorded without design. In these comparatively trifling matters, affecting neither church nor state, neither crown nor people, neither Whig nor Tory, we have not to balance between Clarendon and May, between Lord Macaulay and Mr. Paget; our personal or hereditary prejudices are not awakened or concerned in the questions raised in them; we can afford to be indifferent without affecting to be philosophic, to be candid without being guilty of cant. Moreover, if we are not amused by the matter, neither are we likely to be instructed by it: dullness in the narrator brings its own immediate punish-

Digitized by Google

ment with it: *Quodcunque ostendis sic* (*i. e.* unpicturesquely), *incredulus odi.* Traced by the finger of Dryasdust, such themes are buried in the *Archæologia*, and disinterred by historians to serve as accessories to their higher and graver narrative. But the curious in antiquity who would keep his readers awake must be entertaining as well as erudite. His vessel may be ballasted as heavily as he chooses with sound learning; but he must trick out his wares in gay colours, and dispose them on his stall in a manner pleasant to the eye. It may be a duty to learn all that conduced to the Reformation in England, or the Revolution in France—all the antecedents and consequents of the Petition of Rights, and the National Assembly; but it is not incumbent on any one to "get up" the curiosities of history. To be ignorant of these will be no discredit in society, will be no hindrance to success in a competitive examination. The burden of amusing is accordingly laid on the shoulders of all who frequent "By-meadow Lane;" and as easy reading is said to be the result of hard writing, so books like Mr. Morley's *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* are among the most difficult to write successfully. We are inclined to think that few persons will readily close this volume until they have perused it *ab ovo ad mala*. It is well conceived, so far as regards its theme; and well executed, as far as regards its manner. We could desire, indeed, that in his earlier chapters he had avoided the modern-antique style, which not only does not catch and represent the tone of a genuine chronicle, but has been ridden to death long ago. As his story proceeds, however, Mr. Morley's manner of narrating improves with it, and the latter moiety of the book is open to little or no objection in this respect. Altogether he has produced a very learned, curious, and animated picture of scenes in the past of England; one which will interest those who read for amusement alone, and instruct those who mark and learn, meditate and digest the light or the solid food presented to their understandings. The woodcuts which illustrate the text deserve special commendation, both for their selection and execution. They serve the double purpose of maps for the ground and memorials of the peculiar scenes enacted on it. If St. Bartholomew had his poet-laureate in Ben Jonson two centuries ago, he has now found in Mr. Morley his archivist and historiographer.

There is scarcely any subject which may not be made to serve as a centre to divers other subjects; scarcely any one province of knowledge standing so apart and isolated as not to draw to itself trains of kindred provinces and associations. Sometimes these kinsfolk or allies will merely osculate and then diverge for ever; sometimes they will coincide also, and interpenetrate one another, as if they had really sprung from one parent root.

Digitized by Google

Other themes, again, are in their nature so elastic that, like Berkeley's famous Essay on Tar-water, or the ancient conception of Rumour, one end of them rests upon common earth, while the other scales the empyrean. Among such preëminently central and elastic subjects,—*central*, that is to say, in virtue of their relations to man's life, and *elastic* by reason of their numerous affinities,—roads, inns, and fairs hold a conspicuous station. Upon every one of them volumes have been written, and will continue to be written. Bergier, in his two quarto volumes upon *Les grands Chemins de l'Empire romain*, has touched upon a single province only of the subject of *roads*. Tholosanus (*Jean de Tours*) has scarcely glanced at *fairs* in his treatise *De Nundinis et Mercatibus;* and though *clubs* have their chroniclers, *inns* still await one. Yet when we remember that from the remotest ages man has been migratory, gregarious, and convivial; that he has accordingly required the means of transit, assemblage, and recreation; that business, religion, and pleasure, have all combined to render these three instruments of motion, station, and refreshment necessary to him; that if we take the wings of the morning, we meet with them in the most ancient of lands; that if we step westward, we discover them in the most recent,—we shall find that the history of roads, inns, and fairs, ascends by perceptible degrees to the first syllables of recorded time, and then passes into that illimitable region which antedates antiquity itself. Our present business is with fairs, especially with that which Mr. Morley has now caused to afford a pleasant and profitable chapter in the history of English life and manners. Before, however, confining ourselves within the bounds of the "smooth field,"—for such was once the now granite-paven square of Smithfield,—we will glance at some of the precursors of the great fair which had St. Bartholomew for its patron—so far as they present features in common with this once populous resort of the pious, the busy, and the idle.

The first fair, like the first play, is, or at least used to be, an epoch in childhood. It was—with its streets of booths, its glorified confectionery, its wilderness of toys, its banners, its music, its monsters, its beasts from Afric and from Ind, its sea of faces, its garish colours, its hubbub of sounds—a primary revelation of the marvels and the mystery of the great world. Thenceforward the dreams and imaginings of the nursery assumed a new aspect; the horizon of the real and the unreal was suddenly enlarged; the imitative faculties of its inmates became more vigorous; times and seasons were differently computed; the remembrance of it was recalled by broken toys, by wandering organs, by every stray waif of the great jubilee that met us on the high-road,—bears and monkeys, caravans and tum-

Digitized by Google

blers, gipsy tents, and the uncouth garbs and faces of such Ishmaelites of the earth as have no abiding-place upon it. The skirts of the vision lingered on the evening sky long after the last booth had been struck, and the quaint old market-place had resumed its usual dullness. Thenceforward to the mind of childhood it became a kind of *lustrum*, or Olympiad; a period of time to and from which all other time was to be reckoned. The fair was a meteor which had shot athwart the firmament of our daily life.

How deeply the image of the Bedfordshire fairs had impressed itself upon the mind of John Bunyan appears from his description of the fair in the town of Vanity. The allegory vanishes in the vivid precision of the scene. "This fair," he writes, "is no new erected business, but a thing of ancient standing. . . . . In it are several rows and streets, under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended: the Britain Row, the French Row, the Italian Row, the German Row; where several sorts of vanities are to be sold, as houses, lands, trades, places, honours, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not." John, unless it were to preach in the outskirts to a few stray sheep in the wilderness, was no frequenter of such scenes since the days when he played skittles and swore like a trooper; but the profane image rested on his mind's eye with unfading power. In his days, indeed, and long afterwards, fairs were in their glory. Few of the provincial towns or cities of England were connected with one another by great roads, or were wealthy enough to possess or support retail shops. Fairs stood to them in the place of two-thirds of what is now the local and ordinary trade. At these migratory depôts alone, whose seasons and duration were fixed by statutes and charters, could all the elegancies and many of the necessaries of life be obtained, at least without imposing on the buyers of them long and costly journeys to London, Bristol, or Norwich. So necessary were they to the existence of the community, that in the reign of Henry VI. the monks of the priory of Maxtoke in Warwickshire, and of Bicester in Oxfordshire, laid in their annual stores of common necessaries at Stourbridge fair in Cambridgeshire, at least 100 miles distant, and notwithstanding that the two cities of Oxford and Coventry were in their immediate neighbourhood. In the reign of Henry VIII., it appears from the household book of Henry Percy, fifth earl of Northumberland, that his lordship's family was supplied with necessaries for the whole year from fairs,—"He that stands charged with my Lorde's house for the houll yeir, if he maye possibly, shall be at all Faires, where the greice emptions shall be boughte for the house for the houll yeir, as wine, wax, beiffes, muttons, wheite

Digitized by Google

and malt;" and in the reign of Elizabeth, Tusser recommends to his farmer the same plan, both for purchase and sale:

> "At Bartilmewtide, or at Stourbridge faire,
> buie that as is needful thy house to repaire:
> Then sel to thy profit both butter and cheese,
> who buieth it sooner the more he shall leese."

In the third year of James I. Stourbridge fair had acquired such celebrity that hackney-coaches attended it from London; and it subsequently became so extensive that for several years no fewer than sixty coaches have been known to ply at this fair.

Mr. Morley has glanced, in the introduction to his proper theme, at some of the more remarkable of these assemblages in Europe generally. Those of the East were no less considerable and were generally held on some spot consecrated by religious traditions. Under the Fatimite Caliphs, in the eleventh century, there was an annual fair held on Mount Calvary; and in the time of Constantine, Jews, Gentiles, and Christians assembled in great numbers to perform their several religious rites, and to hold a fair around a tree reputed to be the oak of Mambre under which Abraham entertained the angels. The frequenters of this fair displayed a cosmopolite temper which would have contented Goethe himself. In the sixth century St. Basil complained that his own devotions and those of his flock were disturbed by the tumult of the fairs held near the martyrs' shrines. But most picturesque of all must have been "the great fair of Almachara in Arabia, which, to avoid the great heat of the sun, was kept in the night, and by the light of the moon," and of which Sir Thomas Browne desired to have a picture for his "Museum clausum." The fair which Dagobert chartered "in honour of the Lord and to the glory of St. Denys" was a step in advance of free-trade and civilisation in France. During the ten days in which it was held, the high-roads, as in the days of Deborah the prophetess, "were delivered from the noise of the archers," and men during that period went to and fro in peace. The taxes, customs, and *octroi*, which hitherto had swallowed up half the merchants' goods, were remitted, and Paris became an emporium for "the iron and lead of the Saxons, for slaves, for the jewelry and perfumes of the Jews, for the oils, wines, and fat of Provence and Spain, for the honey and madder of Neustria and Brittany, and for merchandise from Egypt and the East." The fair was proclaimed "on the 10th of October, was opened by a procession of monks from the abbey of St. Denys; and in later times it was usual for the Parliament of Paris to allow itself a holiday called *Landi*, in order that its members might take part in the great marriage-feast of commerce and religion." Perhaps still more memorable than any Mr. Morley has named—

Digitized by Google

than the fairs of St. Denys, Frankfort, Lubeck, or Munich—are the great fair of *Novogorod* in Russia, which has assembled for centuries, and still continues to assemble, myriads of nearly every colour and costume, and the yet greater one of the *Hurdwar* in the northern part of Hindostan. Neither Babylon nor great Al-Cairo, in their most high and palmy state, exhibited such myriads of the human race, or so diversified in speech, feature, and attire. Scarcely one of the families of mankind is there without its representative; and in each case the vast assemblage, dispersing as rapidly as it has been evoked, spreads its several radii over the great tableaux of Asia and Europe, and "leaves not a rack behind."

But *paulo minora canamus*, we must descend from the general institution of fairs, and refer the reader who would know more of them to such authorities as Marco Polo, and to the Spanish chroniclers of America, who saw and marvelled at the sight of the periodical gatherings of Mexico and Peru. Our boundaries will henceforth be a few acres of marsh and meadow land in the suburbs of London, at Smithfield, lying within the king's market, and entailed on the crown for the maintenance thereof, and therefore not, strictly speaking, belonging to the individual wearer of it.

It was truly an ungracious bit of ground. In the first place, the gallows had long stood on the site of the future church; and a Greek or Roman founder of a temple, or even a city, would have turned his ploughshare far away from soil so unblest. Then, according to Mr. Morley's chronicler, the land was as barren as the estate which Captain Dalgetty had the luck to inherit: "The place, aforn his cleansing, pretended none hope of goodness. Right unclean it was, and as a marsh dungy and fenny, with water almost every time abounding."

Assuredly the builders of churches and monasteries, in their notions of eligible sites, differed widely from the modern Scotts and Barrys. Either they had great confidence in the virtues of hair-cloth; or, like Corporal Trim, they "burnt brandy in the trenches," as a preventive against ague, rheumatism, and marsh-fever; or, being holier, were also hardier men than ourselves. In these matters, indeed, we have sometimes little to thank them for—*delicta majorum immeriti luimus?*—since, inasmuch as our towns and cities have grown up for the most part around cathedrals and abbeys, and as these were generally seated in the middle of a swamp, we owe to our ancestors' contempt of damp and foul air some of the ills which registrars bewail quarterly, and Boards of Health are labouring to correct. The founder of the Priory of St. Bartholomew had, however, little or no choice. The site of his erection had been revealed to him in a vision;

Digitized by Google

and perhaps the saint who accorded it was not unwise in his generation, since the king might have scrupled to grant to the petitioner a more valuable spot of the royal demesnes.

But we must now turn our eyes on the grantee, the founder of the priory. He will present some mediæval features worth our notice.

The founder of the Priory of St. Bartholomew would seem to have been as ingenious a gentleman as any recorded in the Lives of the Saints or the Picaroons. Dr. Doran has overlooked Rayer, or, as he was called in the Latin Chronicle, Raherus, in his biography of royal fools and jesters; yet he was well entitled to a conspicuous niche in the temple of fooldom. Rayer combined the properties of mime and monk. He raised himself in the world by his admirable gift of jesting; he confirmed his fortunes by good works, sackcloth, and cowl. Horace Walpole shrewdly remarks that Gray saw but half the truth when he wrote that many Hampdens, Miltons, and Cromwells might lurk in the obscurity of a village; since lawn-sleeves also might conceal many a dextrous attorney, and a judge's wig cover the head of many an excellent jack-pudding. Rayer would have fitted both Gray and Walpole's "modern instances" admirably. He was originally of Yorick's profession—a king's jester; but his coxcomb was destined to become a cowl. Though of low birth, he contrived to insinuate himself into noble and princely households, and even into the king's palace itself. There his ready wit and adroit flatteries proved a sauce so acceptable to the sirloins and chines of our gross-feeding ancestors, that he was looked for when the seneschal brought in the first dish, and was not dismissed until the torches began to burn dim and the wine and wassail had dulled the faculties which had been tickled by his sayings. He was a useful fellow in all masques and revelries, lord of misrule, manager of the sports, and principal actor in the same at the court of his sovereign liege Henry I.; and as he seems to have had the knack of presenting petitions for others, so he doubtless secured for himself both guerdon and remuneration. Wiser in his generation than Yorick, who merely pointed a moral and adorned a play; than Will Somers, who narrowly escaped hanging by the great cardinal; and than Archie, who got his motley coat stripped off by Laud,—Rayer realised property. He coined his brain for ducats by his jesting as effectually as if he had indited a comic History of England or a comic Blackstone; and when mimes and quips and quiddities had done their work, he turned his back on them, and began the serious business of his life.

Henry Beauclerc, like his father the Conqueror, was a right valiant king, though he could write his own name, and even

Digitized by Google

read, without aid from his chancellor or confessor, his letters and speeches, his lauds and primes, and possibly also pious or profane chansons in the tongues of *Langue d'Oc* and *Langue d'Oil*. But his mind was not unclouded. He was plagued with evil dreams, and frequent misgivings about his condition. Certainly his visions of the night were of the worst sort. At times he saw a great company of clerks, armed with divers weapons, and threatening him with arrest for debt; at other times he was

"Cum grege linigero circumdatus et grege calvo,"

surrounded by bishops in synod, striking at him with their croziers. A sovereign so haunted in our days would seek relief at Malvern or Harrogate, Scarborough or Brighton, or from the prescriptions of Sir Henry Holland. Eight centuries ago the method of purgation was different, and modern means were not so available. The ablest leeches in the twelfth century were Jews, unmeet to physic an anointed sovereign; Malvern was too near the Welsh border for it to be a safe resort for invalids; Harrogate and Scarborough stood in the midst of a howling wilderness, which the Conqueror had made when he wasted with fire and sword the whole space between the Humber and the Tweed; and the sea-side was still insecure, for although the days of the Vikings were nearly over, yet there were "water-rats" in the shape of pirates who swept off lord and lout, man and cattle, indifferently, and would have exacted a king's ransom as blithely as Falstaff robbed the king's carriers. And so Henry Beauclerc medicined his soul by doing "great deeds of charity" in Normandy and England, among which was the founding of Reading Abbey, about the same time that his jester Rayer expiated his sins as mime and jester by founding the Priory of St. Bartholomew in Smithfield.

When the Jew, in Boccaccio's tale, who had nearly been persuaded to become a Christian, insisted upon seeing Rome before he was baptised, his Florentine friends gave up their convert for lost: "For," said they, "once let him see the capital of Christendom, and its simony, its license, and its turbulence will root in him more deeply than ever his allegiance to Moses and the prophets." Their augury, though reasonable enough, was not fulfilled; for the Israelite, after visiting and considering Rome, demanded instant baptism on his return, convinced, as he said, that none but the true faith could exist at all amid such manifold and monstrous corruptions. It does not appear that the faith of Rayer was similarly tried; either Rome was, when he visited it, less openly abominable than it afterwards became, or the sense of the jester was less delicate than that of the Jew, and the ex-mime was confirmed by what

Digitized by Google

he saw and heard there in his purpose of "going into religion."

Seldom were men grievously sick in those days without desiring to become monks: "dying, they put on the weeds of Dominic." Rayer was no exception to the practice. The recollection of his inconvenient jesting troubled him: perhaps he had mocked the royal chaplains at the king's table, or even made mouths at Thomas à Becket. The approach of death sobered "the pestilent mad knave;" and he vowed that if God would grant him health, and restore him to his own country, he would make an hospital for recreation of poor men, and minister to them, "therein gathered," necessaries after his power.

It is very interesting to note the difference between the paths of ancient and modern charity. Now, if a hospital, a church, or an almshouse, is to be built and endowed, the good work is performed by association through the instrumentality of sermons, subscription-lists, fancy-fairs, and petitionary cards. Patrons are elected, governors and trustees are appointed, committees organised. All that is done implies the working of a social system, highly civilised and nicely graduated. The individual has become a unit of greater or lesser dimensions in the social sum. But when St. Bartholomew's Priory was founded, the exemplar deeds of charity were ordinarily performed by single hands. The patron was a saint; the labours of governors and trustees were discharged by the founder; and the world at large stood apart from the pious or charitable work.

Yet let no one imagine that the latter estate of the world is worse than the first. In uncivilised ages men do not, and indeed cannot, coöperate easily. They are for the most part restricted from combined action by the strong lines of demarcation which part one class of society from another. The merchant would have been deemed presumptuous who should have laid down his bag of silver beside the knightly purse; the yeoman would have been deemed a prodigal who brought his gift to the merchant's counter. When we read of the splendid endowments of a Roger Bigod, or the unwearied solicitations to the great of a Hubert de Losinga, we are apt to form too high an estimate of the virtues of individuals, and to lament the decay of personal charity and devotion. But the comparison need awaken no sentiment of regret. Society has advanced, the individual has not retrograded; and it is more just to exult in the progress of the community than to deplore the falling-off of such private munificence as Rayer was enabled to exert.

The vows of Rayer were heard; his health and strength returned to him; visions were vouchsafed to encourage him in his charitable designs, and St. Bartholomew proffered his services

Digitized by Google

as patron of the future hospital, and as guarantee for raising the necessary funds. He was as good as his word; nor has our age of reason any right to smile at that age of faith. Many a promising scheme for the benefit of the friendless and afflicted comes to nothing, or is shorn of its fair proportions, in the nineteenth century, which in the twelfth would have taken root downward and borne fruit upward. The priory and its lands and revenues were chartered by the king. A fair was from the first connected with the church, and put under the immediate protection of the saint. During the three days on which it was ordained to be held, viz. the eve of the feast, the feast itself, and the day following, no one resorting to it might be arrested for debt, or required to pay dues other than the prior, canons, and clergy of the priory should impose. The success of his project seems to have had a most happy effect on Rayer himself; for whereas the jester in his profane state was lean, like Pharaoh's evil kine, it is written of the prior that "the skin of his tabernacle dilated."

St. Bartholomew, unless legends and Mr. Morley do him great injustice, acquired or retained in a better world a strong desire for the goods of this one. Nor have his gains any apparent connection with godliness. He would, when it was made worth his while, consent unto thieves; would drive a hard bargain with mariners in distress, and tout for custom as pertinaciously as any Thames-sculler, or white-aproned waiter in Doctors' Commons. In him army contractors had a firm friend, provided always they set apart for the saint a portion of the profits of the stores which they had filched from the king's depôts. He would have been in peril of the Weedon Commission, and been called to account by Mr. Roebuck for his doings in the Crimea, had modern slop-sellers worshiped any saint but Plutus himself. Bartholomew, indeed, seems to have been the lineal successor of Mercury and Laverna, and to have indemnified himself for the loss of his own skin by stripping and flaying all and sundry persons who came within his reach. It is curious to see the popular religion of the age reflected in its legends. No sooner was a religious house established than it became a point of honour as well as of interest to set up a good business in miracles, and to outbid by signs and wonders other rival houses. At the Priory of St. Bartholomew cripples regained the use of their limbs: a young man whose right hand stuck to his left shoulder, and whose head stuck to his left hand, was unglued there, and released from his inconvenient agglomeration; close-fisted butchers were made liberal by the promise that their bounty should be no loss to them; and—but this is a more questionable miracle—a woman's tongue that had

Digitized by Google

become too large for her mouth, and consequently useless for speech, was reduced to its proper size and freedom. These deeds of mercy were duly trumpeted abroad; it was advertised through Middlesex and all the adjacent counties, that whoever needed healing, or connivance in gain, would do better to apply to St. Bartholomew than to resort to the shrine of St. Alban's, St. Edmund's, or St. Osyth; and Hertfordshire, Suffolk, and Essex found their custom in "extraordinary cures" diminish. The art of *puff* is not the creature of the unbelieving and speculating nineteenth century: *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona;* Holloways, Moses and Sons, and Barnums, have never been wanting in the land. Perhaps, after all, the trade in miracles is not more deleterious than the trade in medicines, or adulterated faith worse than adulterated food.

A monastery and a hospital, and not a fair, were in the thoughts of Rayer when he obtained from King Henry the grant of the meadow of "smooth field." Perhaps, could he have foreknown the uses to which his erection and its lands appurtenant would come at last, he would have thought that his own career was symbolic of the fortunes of the soil. He had laid the foundation of his estate in jests and mimes; and to jests and mimes it would again return, after serving other sacred and secular purposes. One object of his foundation, indeed, abides unchanged; the sick are still relieved in the noble hospital of St. Bartholomew, and science and suffering have even now reason to exult in the charity of the penitent Touchstone. Dr. Johnson, in his prologue for the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, predicted that a day might come when on the stage which Garrick trod

"New Hunts might box, and Mahomet might dance;"

and more than once or twice has the prophecy been fulfilled. So usual an appendage of church-festivals were fairs in all ages, that Rayer might fairly anticipate the precincts of his priory becoming a haunt of periodical revelry and misrule. Fairs, indeed, have in all ages seated themselves on the skirt of religious assemblies. They belonged to the great perennial games of Greece, as well as to the Christian church; to the sacrifices of the Roman commons to Diana on the Aventine; to the solemn meetings of the Etruscan Lucumos beside the Lake Velinus and in the groves of Ferentinum; and to the annual assemblies of the Celtic races in the primeval forests of Aquitaine. Yet the faith and patience of Rayer would have been sorely tried could a tenth part of the reality which Mr. Morley's pages delineate have been brought before his gaze by his patron Bartholomew. Of this strange and grotesque panorama we shall now attempt

Digitized by Google

to exhibit a few compartments, preserving the order of time, and warning the reader that there are many more slides in the author's magic lantern than we have space to admit into our brief abstract of them.

Mr. Morley's topographical details might justify a pilgrimage to Smithfield and its purlieus. "Mummie," says Sir Thomas Browne, "is become merchandise: Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams." To like base uses are turned portions of Rayer's priory. Its great hall is broken up, divided into floors, and employed as a tobacco factory. In other sections of it pickle-barrels are stored up. The priory has either served for a stone-quarry to the neighbouring buildings, or been encroached upon by them as the trees of the forest encroach upon the primeval cities of Yucatan and Guatemala. Factory-walls intrude on the church-walls; the nave of the church is entirely gone; the cloisters, after serving for years as a stable, have fallen down; and a Protestant parish-church occupies ground which miracles once commanded men to reverence as the oratory of the Virgin.

Rayer himself, indeed, were he again to revisit the glimpses of the moon, would need Mr. Morley or his book to guide him through his own house and premises; and perhaps exclaim, "Are all my gibes and good works come to this?" It were not "to inquire too curiously," however, to ask whether, after all, the fair which accidentally grew out of the priory were not, on the whole, for mankind generally, the more useful institution. By the privileges accorded to it, the fair introduced a rude yet effective element of free-trade; by the numbers which it attracted annually, it poured wealth into London; and by the amusements which it provided for the people, it introduced the rudiments of the most vigorous branch of English literature, the Drama; while by the spectacles it afforded of rare animals and productions, it served to the ignorant as a kind of Pinnock's Catechism of geography and natural history. With our museums, botanical and zoological gardens, we can afford to dispense with Bartholomew and Greenwich fairs; with the Princess's and Sadler's Wells theatres to embody our historical drama, we need not the gross devices of their booths and theatrical wagons: but in ages when most men made their marks, and when even to read entitled a man to the benefit of his clergy, or clerkship, these rough and feeble instruments were "mighty masters" in creating, cherishing, and refining the tastes and intellect of the people.

Buyers and sellers have in all ages been irresistibly drawn towards the courts of the temple, and have always set up their booths under its protecting shadow. This propensity is an indi-

Digitized by Google

rect tribute to the blessings of peace, and silently conveys a lesson which the Cæsars of the earth have yet to learn. Mr. Morley has appropriately headed one of his chapters, "Literature and Commerce," and traced their intimate connection with much learning and ability. Literature was speedily enlisted in the service of a church which, beyond every other, has shown itself active and adroit in meeting half-way the needs and wishes of the people. What the printing-office is, the monastery was; and the thousands of monks who were employed as copyists of missals, legends, and homilies, represent the tens of thousands of compositors who are now, from morn to dewy eve, employed in circulating knowledge among the masses. It could not escape the notice of men so worldly-wise as the well-organised priesthood of Rome, that of all the various kinds of literature none was so well calculated to amuse and instruct, or even to arouse passions that might be turned to account, as dramatic representation. Thespis again appeared with his cart at Bartholomew fair; and though the worship of the wine-god was no longer the proper service of stage-plays, yet the audience relished their spectacles and their ale as thoroughly as ever the Athenians enjoyed the gifts of Dionysus—the juice of the grape, the choral song, and the stately or side-shaking scenes that accompanied them. A wide arc, indeed, is needed to include between its extremes the dramatic performances at St. Bartholomew's feast. At the one terminus we have a drama entitled "Matter from the Creation of the World," enacted by clerks, that is to say, by deacons in holy orders; at the other we have the "Beggars' Opera," performed under the management of no less a person than Henry Fielding, Bow-street magistrate, and author of "Tom Jones" and "Joseph Andrews." Perhaps in 1959 the curious in old customs will learn with amazement that of the two greatest novelists of the preceding century, one embodied his own Samuel Weller and Mrs. Gamp, and the other extracted excellent mirth from the oddities of the house of Brunswick.

In the only verses which he is known to have written, Bishop Berkeley, at that time earnestly desiring to establish a college of philosophers beyond the Atlantic, said that "the tide of empire always westward flowed." Had he spoken of the tide of fashion, he would have been accounted a prophet even on better grounds than for thus foreseeing the great American Union. Westward for more than two centuries have rank and refinement been flowing in our metropolis. A lord-chancellor who should now choose to have his habitation in Smithfield would be deemed in want of a keeper of his person and a trustee of his property; and a chancellor of the exchequer who dwelt within the bars would be thought capable of bolting with the year's

Digitized by Google

taxes. Yet in those simple times, when monarchs swore, like Charles VII. of France, by the black in their nails, and for the sake of cleanliness commanded, as Henry Tudor did, his courtiers to crop their hair close, King Edward VI.'s lord-chancellor did eat, drink, sleep, and entertain the judges at the openings of term, in a house which he erected in the priory grounds; and Queen Elizabeth's chancellor of the exchequer, Sir Walter Mildmay, kept house hard by. In Charles II.'s reign Smithfield saw as much good company as Bath under the despotism of Beau Nash, or her Majesty's Theatre when Jenny Lind entranced and half suffocated the public. On the 30th of August in the year 1667, Samuel Pepys, who missed no diversions, and records with equal zest the Dutch war and the dancing dolls, found a crowd gathered around the puppet-show of patient Grisel, because the people expected "the coming out" of Lady Castlemaine! It would be too curious to inquire whether the subject of the show brought poor Catherine of Braganza to her ladyship's recollection. But graver persons than "prying Pepys" resorted to these fashionable entertainments. John Locke the philosopher elbowed his way with the rest of the world in the Smithfield crowd; and John Dryden was to be seen in it, with his immense snuff-box and his loose coat of Norwich drugget. Nor were their labours in vain, since Bartholomew fair, in those palmy days, comprised whatsoever was most entertaining and instructive in the metropolis. Dryden may have been a spectator of tragedies little inferior to his own, performed by the best actors of the time, and set on the stage with a pomp and circumstance which, to read of at least, seems to have vied with Mr. Kean's "scenery and decorations." Half the heroes and heroines of the Rosciad performed occasionally at Bartholomew fair. The "stars" of Drury Lane and the Haymarket thought it no degradation to turn eastward ho! and gorgeous tragedy was in no less demand than genteel comedy, opera, and farce. Seneca could not be too heavy, nor Plautus too light, for the spectators. Latterly, indeed, as the fair grew more *bourgeois*, some pains were taken to adapt the dramas to the audience: "they who live to please, must please to live." A dramatic performance entitled "the Siege of Troy" appears to have needed no slight modifications. The prologue informs us that Elkanah Settle—famous in Pope's numbers as the City laureate—adapted this play to "Mrs. Mynn's fashion" (Mrs. Mynn being manager), by leaving out four or five serious characters, cutting out all the serious dialogues, reducing five acts into three, and inserting "a sufficient quantity of right Bartholomew buffoonery." "Bless thee, Bottom, thou art translated." Yet, after all, Elkanah's "comical-tragical" piece may

Digitized by Google

not have been a greater offence against taste than a modern burlesque.

Next to the theatrical booths, the exhibition of monsters was the attractive feature of the fair. But on this subject *inopes nos copia fecit;* we are really overwhelmed by Mr. Morley's catalogue of hideous and ingenious prodigies. Lord Stowell lived some ages too late. He is reported to have exhausted the wonders of London fifty years ago so completely, that one day, offering his sixpence to the exhibitor of a mermaid, he was desired to walk in *gratis,* inasmuch as the fish-woman was only the old sea-serpent in a new dress, and *that* his lordship had often seen before. But neither Lord Stowell, nor Coryatt, nor Aristotle himself could have seen out the *monstra, informia, ingentia,* exhibited in Smithfield with each revolving August. In all Pliny's *Natural History* are no stranger beasts recorded on the authority of travellers' tales than Mr. Morley's list enumerates. Satyrs were comparatively common; even he whom the Latin authors called the "god Pan" might be seen. The "good people" did not escape scot-free. A living fairy was exhibited, supposed to be a hundred and sixty years old, having a face like a child a month old. "Hydras and amphisbœnas dire" stood in the place of the horrors in Dr. Kahn's museum. Among vertebrate animals, the most remarkable we have read of is "a mail child born with a bear growing out of his back;" and the ugliness of the Hottentot Venus, whom some of our readers may have had the privilege of seeing, can scarcely have been so striking as that of the "bold-grimace Spaniard," who "lived fifteen years among the wild creatures in the mountains, and is reasonably supposed to have been taken out of his cradle, an infant, by some savage beast, and wonderfully preserved, till some comedians accidentally passed through those parts, and perceiving him to be of the human race, pursued him to his cave, where they caught him in a net. He performs the following surprising grimaces, viz. he lolls out his tongue a foot long, turns his eyes in and out at the same time, contracts his face as small as an apple, extends his mouth six inches, and turns it into the shape of a bird's beak, and his eyes like to an owl's; turns his mouth into the form of a hat cocked up three ways, and also frames it in the manner of a four-square buckle; licks his nose with his tongue like a cow, and changes his face to such an astonishing degree as to appear like a corpse long buried."

We much regret that our limits compel us to do so little justice to Mr. Morley's instructive and interesting volume. It suggests in every one of its chapters themes on which, if the occasion permitted, we would gladly dilate. From it every order of readers may derive the food of profitable speculation: the economist may

Digitized by Google

learn much from it of the early phases of trade; the philosopher, of the simpler aspect of morals; the historian and the antiquary may borrow much pertinent illustration for their narratives and researches. The scenes enacted within the precincts of Smithfield would furnish a lively and pregnant commentary upon Spenser's stanzas on "Mutabilitie." They do not, indeed, present the august spectacle of empires in ruin, or the decline and decay of nations; yet they exhibit the scarcely less instructive spectacle of the progress and decline of popular customs and humours. Opening in an age of faith, the narrative terminates in an age of reason. At first the religious foundation of Rayer is predominant. The Priory of St. Bartholomew, with its hospital annexed, is a symbol of the time when men reasoned timidly and felt earnestly. Their amusements are coarse, yet often grave: the most solemn actions and passions of the past are represented beside "a dance of clowns and a show of jugglers," without any perception of irreverence or discrepancy. Religion spreads its broad shield over commerce and literature, over earnest and sport; and her presence is deemed "nor obvious nor intrusive." Symbols and pictures are in the place of printing and books: it is a hearing and a seeing, not a reading age. The ground on which the fair was held was often also a stage for more hideous tragedies than *Go by Jeronymo* or Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. The seed of many churches was sown in the grounds of the Priory. The soil was red with much martyr-blood. Here were the Lollards burnt: here also were burnt those who denied Henry's supremacy, or refused to change with the changing creeds and articles of Edward's and Mary's bishops: here Anne Askew was released from pain, and Dutch Anabaptists roasted "with roaring and crying" in Elizabeth's reign. Within the same precincts Englishmen beheld for the last time execution by fire, in the latter half of the eighteenth century. By and by a change creeps over the era of belief: the power of the priest, the truth of miracles, the authority of the visible church, are called in question; the laity begins to think and act for itself, and the religious foundation disappears. Charity, however, does not fail; and the hospital and the almshouse remain. After a few years the supplanting church of Protestantism is assailed by enemies of its own household, and new Presbyter proves but old Priest writ large. An iron and unnatural bondage is forced upon men's souls, and the secular glories of St. Bartholomew fade like the spiritual. Then unreasonable rigour is succeeded by unreasoning license, and the great fair reflects and exaggerates the license of Whitehall under the second Charles. A more decorous generation follows, and the fair is no longer the haunt of the Dorsets and Sedleys, but of "rude mechanicals"

Digitized by Google

and rustics. Last scene of all is when even on these its attractions pall, and it sinks into the lean and slippered state of dotage, and is suppressed without even a murmur from its latest supporters. Here is a picture in little of the advance of civilisation. Music-halls, Cremorne Gardens, the Crystal Palace, and Mr. Spurgeon, have superseded St. Bartholomew. The compensations of time are not less instructive than its mutations; and Mr. Morley's work, studied in a reflective spirit, may prove as wholesome to the reader as narratives of greater pretension, pith, and moment.

Art. VII.—D'AGUESSEAU AND FRENCH JURISPRUDENCE.

Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages du Chancelier D'Aguesseau. Par M. A. Boullée, ancien Magistrat. Paris.

Lives of Lords Chief-Justice Mansfield and Chancellor Eldon. By Lord Chief-Justice Campbell. London.

Foreign criticism upon nations and governments is generally based upon assumptions that are necessarily erroneous. In the first place, the country of the particular censor is adopted, either openly or unconsciously, as the measure, if not of absolute perfection, at least of comparative excellence. Then the special qualities distinctive of this type are supposed equally well adapted to the nation criticised; which is to say that all nations are potentially alike, whatever be their circumstances, history, or race, and that therefore, if they do not conform to the alleged model, it can only be through ignorance or perversity. Moreover the comparison is made in detached parts; and if this or that part be absent in due form, or even in name, the foreign polity is branded as inferior or defective, without regard to the possibility that there may be compensation or completion in some other of the parts, or in the order of the whole.

That these accumulated suppositions are all vicious, must be evident. The right of the assumed standard to such rank should first be proved, unless—what doubtless never happens—it be granted by all parties. But no writer of the present day is so foolish as to believe any government or jurisprudence consummate; our own common law is no longer held to be the perfection of reason, and the infallibility of the constitution is more than questioned. And as with the perfection, so with the

Digitized by Google

preëminence, the assumption of which is in logic still absurder; for a polity or system of law is not a simple or definite quantity; it lies in a relation of particular fitness to the circumstances, physical and mental, of each people. This congruity is the reason of the excellence assumed. But the excellence would disappear on applying the institutions of one nation to the character and condition of any other, which, by the very strictures we pronounce, is shown to be in different circumstances. It therefore ceases to be available as a standard. Thus the critic's premises are self-destructive.

This would be true, even though the difference of circumstances were but accidental. But if it be quite normal and organic, the perversity of the second sub-assumption is the greater. No two peoples whatsoever are, or have been, quite alike. Of no two objects in all nature can strict similarity be affirmed; and even in the same species the resemblance is less in proportion as the subjects are of a higher rank. There is a proverb on the likeness of "two drops of water;" yet view them through a microscope, and see the world of difference! Even in mere externals and to the naked eye, no two leaves of the same plant would be confounded with each other. What must, then, be the differences, physical and moral, between men even of the same nation! But between nations or races these differences become infinite. The principle or law of this progressive divergence is the influx of new causes as the subject is large and complex. To reason from the case of one people to that of another is therefore fallacious, even when it is extended to their polities as complete systems.

But it is vastly more so when the judgment is but piecemeal. Comparative anatomists assure us that the skeleton, throughout the animal series, is the same *as a whole;* it is what Professor Owen would magnificently designate the general "homology" of the vertebrate skeleton. The differences we behold, then, must all reside in the parts and positions: and what establishes the fact is, that the differences vanish in proportion as the parts are viewed no longer as such, but referred to the whole or the type; a conception to which naturalists give the name "analogy," or resemblance of ratio or function. These great laws of the animal system are still more true of the social, and to the full extent of the proportionate complication. Conceive what would be thought of one who should criticise the horse for having hoofs instead of fingers, fore-legs not wings or fins; or who should consider that, of these specific parts, each was wholly wanting in the other kinds of creatures; whereas they are all—fins, wings, fore-legs, arms—the same organ in the function of prehension applied to water, air, earth! Yet this would hardly

Digitized by Google

be a greater absurdity than that of some current lucubrations upon past or actual governments.

Thus, to descend from polities, English writers vaunt, and justly with relation to ourselves, the institutions of trial by jury, grand and petty, and Habeas Corpus; and reprehend their absence in other systems as gross defects. They do not comprehend that foreign writers might more or less plausibly plead as follows: The jury, or popular judicature, is, in use as in origin, a supplement to laws as yet but rude or ill-defined; it rose in ages when the nation had no written legislation; it ranges still upon the border of jurisprudence proper, where the law remains confused in its commixture with the facts; and, above all, it was adapted to the genius of a people who care little for refinements, who mind the substance not the form, and are satisfied with public business only when they have themselves a hand in it. Now where these circumstances do not, all or any of them, exist, the jury could not, of course, be needful or useful; neither, consequently, could its absence be accounted in that case a defect even though there were no substitute, much less if there were. The last was the condition, for example, of the Scotch. They had derived through France from Rome a mature jurisprudence, abundant in provision and exact in procedure; and the genius of the people disposed them to place confidence in abstract institutions without personal embodiment. Thus the jury was in Scotland a superfœtation, introduced from no necessity in *civil* business. Accordingly it has proved of quite equivocal utility.* Such has likewise been the result *à fortiori* in France. The Revolution, when essaying its 'prentice hand at legislation, took in wholesale from the English, among other things, both juries. It soon abandoned the grand inquest, which the Scotch had never imitated; and the petty is transformed, and used besides but scantily.†

* So at least thinks Lord Campbell too: see Life of Lord Mansfield.

† In stating the argument of foreign writers, we do not wish to be understood as more than partially assenting to it. A jury is as necessary a part of the judicial institutions of a free country as a representative chamber is of its political institutions. In very many cases it is, as we expressly admit, more a matter of convenience, habit, and circumstance than English writers like to allow. In others, it is a fundamental principle and indispensable guarantee of freedom. A great French philosopher and publicist—Royer-Collard—has admirably explained the *rationale* of it. After stating that there are offences, often the most dangerous, which defy the prevision of legislators and exact definition in written laws, but which yet cannot be admitted to impunity, he proceeds: "The power of determining the limits of justice beyond the precise prescriptions of the law, and without any other guide than conscience, is arbitrary power. . . . . But if this arbitrary power consolidates itself nowhere, if deposited for a moment in hands from which it escapes the instant after it has been confided to them, it never loses its mobility (*il ne s'immobilise jamais*); if it is society itself which is as

Digitized by Google

Again, the Habeas Corpus has been excellent in England; but it does not follow that it would be so elsewhere: the situation may be different, and there may be besides some substitute. Yet the great lights of English law have lamented French blindness, when it was not called servility, in lacking this palladium. They were doubtless unaware that we derived it from the French, who moreover had enjoyed it some four centuries before us; derived it of course in our own national fashion, as the French had themselves derived or fashioned it, no doubt, from the civil or Roman law *de custodia reorum*. As early as the Institutes (*Etablissemens*) of St. Louis it was enacted that no one should be detained in prison who offered proper bail, except in certain heinous cases. The observance of this law would of course obviate the Habeas Corpus, and in France there was an officer to secure its execution. In England there was neither the law nor the officer, until the Magna Charta introduced the former, but overlooked the sanction of the French officer, which gave it value. The concession in Magna Charta remained in consequence a dead letter. The legal relief from imprisonment for two centuries later was effected by the semi-annual circuit of *oyer* and *terminer*. This is attested by the uncouth name itself, and is still better illustrated by the *alias* of "gaol-delivery,"—that is, delivery of the gaol from the encumbrance of the prisoners, not the delivery of the prisoners from the injustice of the gaol. It was only after the Civil Wars and through the license of the last Stuart in the abuse of General Warrants, that the nation was driven to insist on the execution of the law, which it did characteristically by a process *ad hoc*. Such was the origin of Habeas Corpus at the noon of the seventeenth century, although most Englishmen imagine it as old as the constitution.

The French officer alluded to had also in charge the enforcement of the law *against* the prisoner as well as for him. In England this was left to the party aggrieved, or any private individual who might choose to interfere, and who in *principle* was thus at liberty to modify the law or annul it. But as this liberty, if allowed in practice, might have kept us in bar-

it were invested with it, it loses all its dangers, it can strike without being illegitimate. What will this representative of society be? It will be the jury." Again: "Citizens called for an instant to become judges escape, in virtue of their situation itself, from the pressure of foreign influences, and from that habit of condemning which renders condemnation too easy. The temporary magistracy with which they are invested penetrates them with that sovereign respect for the law which is the foundation of the public morality of free peoples." Yet further: "A nation which does not itself protect the life, honour, and security of each of its members, may have enlightened and virtuous magistrates, but it does not enjoy political liberty; it is under the sword." *Speeches on the Law for repressing Offences of the Press, in the Chamber of Deputies, Dec.* 16, 1817. We take the extracts from M. Vingtain's excellent *Vie publique de Royer-Collard*, pp. 73, 74.

Digitized by Google

barism, the principle was contravened by one or two expedients. The chief of these was the Grand Jury (established likewise by Magna Charta), who examine the complaint or information of individuals, but never can themselves initiate the prosecution, any more than can the attorney-general, who is in like manner an intermediary; so that, in fact, the private individual is still prosecutor, and the legal arbiter and sanction of our criminal law. As to the issue of the process in the name of the sovereign, it was in reality another expedient necessitated by a doubtful rule from the same source which disqualifies the testimony of parties to the action. To employ the prosecutor as a witness also, the sovereign was nominally made to take his place. Thus, with regard to the nature of the criminal law and to the admission of evidence, we have controlled the false principle of individualism, but only by setting up against it the double contradiction of the Grand Jury to check its *consequences*, and the fiction of a *public* prosecutor. We may add, that most of the fictions of our law have a similar origin; for seldom indeed is English law logically consequential.

The other of the two expedients referred to is the coroner. His function is distinguished by being particular in its object but permanent in its exercise, whereas the "grand" inquest is general and periodical. The latter is logically and historically posterior and supplemental to the "petty" inquest. The coroner, a primitive officer of the crown, as the name itself commemorates, is strictly the representative of the official part which the sovereigns of this country have ever taken in bringing crime to light; and the coroner takes notice of death only when violent or sudden, and even then not as a matter of course, but only when invited.

Now English lawyers, who are accustomed, and with reason, to view these related institutions as the glory of our jurisprudence, are perhaps too apt to deem their absence in foreign systems necessarily an imperfection or abuse. On the contrary, the logical imperfection at least may be alleged, with fairer reason, to be on our side. We have been forced, it may be urged, to erect painfully and progressively these serial breastworks against the inroads of the principle that crime concerns only individuals; whereas the Scotch and French, by starting from the principle that the state is the party aggrieved by all crime, were led to appoint a public officer to watch it, who is thus a substitute for the Habeas Corpus and all the three kinds of English juries. This officer is known to us in Scotland as the Lord Advocate: in France he was descriptively called the *Public* Minister, in distinction from the governmental minister of the monarch; and in his merely legal

Digitized by Google

function, the Procurator-General, a title well expressing the *public care* he had in charge.

By this preparatory train of reflections we are led to the ministry whose highest type is the main subject of this article; and led by a procedure which better shows its character than any mere description or recital of attributes, for it exhibits the original relations of the office, and illustrates it by contrast with its analogues in the English law. To apprise the English reader that the ministry in question involved not only all the familiar procedures referred to, but also other powers no less important, afterwards to be noted, is probably to give him the sole means of comprehending a magistracy illustrious throughout the course of French history; to explain to him how it produced, directly or indirectly, a score of such great jurists as the Godefroys, the Cujases, the Budés, the L'Hôpitals, the Pothiers, the Domats, the Desmoulins, the D'Aguesseaus. The contemplation of this illustrious line of aspirants to, or occupants of magisterial office, as eminent for accuracy as for amplitude of knowledge, no less elegant than erudite, as great in method* as in law,—is not ill calculated to inspire us with some envy or regret. With magistrates of this stamp to execute and to improve it, English law, it may be thought, would now be in a different state. At all events, it might be more symmetrical, more systematic and complete, if less suited to the exigencies of our community. The jury is the natural expression of a society profoundly conservative of individual rights and personal freedom; its three forms represent accordingly, in the judicial order, our King, Lords, and Commons respectively in the political. With the French, who view society as an organic unity, the guardianship of justice must by the like logic have been given to a single and a permanent magistrate, who represents the sovereign or rather the state; for the sovereign himself was but the symbol of the state, which is in part the meaning of the *mot* of the *Grand Monarque*. In fine, of these quite opposite conceptions of jurisprudence, the French was that of order viewed too much as an end in and for itself, and tending to despotism; the English, that of liberty, guaranteed by, but not sacrificed to, order. Our readers will be doubtless at no loss to decide between them. We shall therefore only add, that the English principle has upon its side entire antiquity, barbarian as well as classic, and also mediæval Europe and all the actual German states; while the magistracy proper is peculiar to the French, and, in a modified sense, to the Scotch.

* This is manifested even in the titles of their chief works. That of Domat is, "Des Lois civiles dans *leur ordre naturel*;" that of Godefroy, "De *Ratione Ordinis* in Pandectis;" that of Cujas, "De *Ortu et Progressu* Juris Civilis,"—the true fountain of the school of jurisprudence called historical.

Digitized by Google

This public minister, or procurator-general of French law, enjoyed a power in fact discretionary, if it was not despotic. At the period of the formal institution of the ministry in 1302, when the parliament, which was its pedestal, was fixed at Paris, the extent of its functions may be gathered from the oath of office. This obliged its occupant "to see justice done alike to great and humble, to foreigners and citizens, without distinction of rank or nation; to guard also the king's rights, but without prejudice to those of others; to guard the observance of local customs and usages; not to suffer within the jurisdiction of the officer people without religion, disturbers of the peace, usurers, or persons of scandalous and wicked life." Budé, who was himself for a time a magistrate, as well as a great commentator and restorer of the Greek language, describes the office some two and a half centuries later "as the depository of all the interests of the prince and the public, the asylum of the laws, the bulwark of justice and injured innocence,"—"*Magistratus hic est in quem* OMNES *suas actiones,* PRINCIPES, POPULUS, UNIVERSI *transcripserunt; asylum legum, arx justiciæ, innocentiæ vim passæ ab judicio circumventæ propugnaculum, intercessor rerum malarum, suasor rerum bonarum, præsentis semper animi actor et defensor, de sententia juris et æquitatis.*" With this enormous sphere of action, judicial and even social, we easily conceive the high dignity of the office. We can also comprehend how worse than puerile it is to draw conclusions from a scheme of jurisprudence where this office is wholly absent, to a scheme of which it is the very essence. What seems difficult to understand is, how this autocratic magistracy should, for the five centuries during the course of which its history is known with the utmost completeness, have offered no corruption or official malversation.

The philosophy of this French integrity is soundly accounted for by the biographer of D'Aguesseau before us. "It is the privilege," says he, "of institutions which have the *social or common interest for their principle and motive* to exercise upon the men who attach themselves to them an active and a salutary influence; and nothing is so proper to elevate the soul and to multiply the springs of talent as *the constant search after the good and the true.*" This is equally profound and just. Indeed these words suggest a source of government as yet but little understood. The principle they involve bubbled up sentimentally in the "chivalry" of Burke's eulogy, and will in other times attain a scientific development. But in our days every effort is made to bind this principle as in a frost; to limit statesmanship alike in its power for good and evil; to reverse the liberality of even criminal law, and presume public men all scoundrels until they prove the contrary; to degrade virtue to obligation, and reason to routine.

Digitized by Google

Than such a course there is nothing, on the contrary, more calculated to provoke the conduct which it strives to prevent. There is a French adage which says that men are estimated at whatever price they choose to set upon themselves. There is truth enough in this to give an edge to the satire; but there is more truth in the reverse,—that men are really estimable in proportion to the worth which is conceded them by the public: and it is this large magnanimous confidence of a great nation that inspirited the French magistracy, sons of a tame *bourgeoisie*, to brave not merely sordid gold, but the kings of France and the popes of Rome. It is the spirit of distrust and suspicion in English politics, on the other hand, which, if it sometimes preserve our liberties, tends to lower permanently the character of the men who rule us. In France this grand social supervisorship was based, we said, upon the parliament, a brief sketch of which will therefore be relevant to the subject; and all the more so, that the import of this institution seems to us ill understood, not only here, but by the French themselves.

The parliament of Paris was, as every one knows, but one of sundry local institutions of the same name. It gradually absorbed the public influence of the others by being situated in the capital, or centralised, like all things French. They did not originate, as is sometimes supposed, in the great Frankish gatherings remembered by the name of the Champs de Mars and Mai. These were popular assemblages analogous to our Commons, whose members were deputed by the people, not the monarch; only that while military things were there the rule, they are luckily in the Commons sunk to very rare exceptions. Of these Champs the lineal successors in France were the States-General. The members of the French parliament, on the other hand, were named by the king, were Councillors of State, and composed at first of nobles. Later, ecclesiastics of distinction were admitted, when the need of some infusion of intellect or knowledge came to be felt. The body passed in this way from a council to a supreme court of justice, receiving appeals from the baronial tribunals. Thus far the jurisprudence was a medley, like the court, composed of Frankish usages put into shape by the canon law. This was the character of even the constitution of Charlemagne. The recovery of the Pandects introduced a new era; the application of this *juridical* treasure became a sort of rage; the clergy of the parliament felt in their turn the need of the sort of aid which they themselves had brought the barons; the *bourgeoisie* of the upper grade seized the occasion, became profound jurists or eloquent advocates, entered in this humble guise the high court of parliament, but ended with ousting the *sword* and *cross* by the *robe*. The body,

Digitized by Google

thus transformed by a natural development into a regular tribunal of supreme and civil justice, had moreover retained a relic of its old political origin in the shape of a right of registering the edicts of the monarch. This was formally a sanction and virtually a veto; liable, however, to be superseded by that strange prerogative the *lit de justice.*

The constitution of this body in the days of D'Aguesseau may be summarily stated as follows. It was divided into several "chambers" or departments with special resorts, and a grand chamber which consisted of a single president and nine assessors, styled presidents *à mortier;* also twenty lay councillors and twelve clerical. The princes of the blood, the dukes and peers, the chancellor and the archbishop of Paris, retained seats; but they seldom attended save on business relating to their own order—on occasion of the trial of a noble, or an intrigue against the "Gallicans." The under departments were composed of a court of inquests, or appeals in civil business; a court of criminal appeals, named *Le Tournel,* from the order of rotation in the service of the judges; and of two chambers of requests. The union of all the chambers—a sort of committee of the whole house—gave the parliament its deliberative and political capacity. Agreeably to the complete transformation of its primal character through the spontaneous process of development described, the mode of convention was conveniently indefinite. The session was permanent, with a vacation of a month a year.

It is obvious, then, how wholly opposite in character and constitution, as well as in origin, were the parliament of Paris and its English namesake. The reason of the difference is not so generally understood, and is remarkable, considering the common race of the Franks and English. The native writers for the most part distinguish the French parliament as being the special organ and expression of the *bourgeoisie.* And so far they are certainly right; this body, to the number of some forty thousand families, had usually a full monopoly of its offices or other interests. But this statement is incomplete; for the *bourgeoisie* correspond to what we call our "middle class," who assuredly took an important part in giving form to the House of Commons; so that the contrast in the result is not due to this common feature. Augustin Thierry has decidedly advanced, though not finally attained, the definitive solution, when he merges both the parliament and the *bourgeoisie* in the *tiers-état.* But as the *tiers-état* would, as it is commonly conceived, correspond to our middle and lower classes combined, the objection might appear to remain undisturbed. It is, however, to be remembered, that France alone has had what is properly the *tiers-état.* This is at least the opinion of M. Guizot, who denies this social class

Digitized by Google

to all antiquity and modern Europe, as well as expressly to England itself. Modern states have possessed *commons*, but not a *tiers-état*. "*Il y a eu des communes dans toute l'Europe; il n'y a eu vraiment de tiers-état qu'en France.*"* But though the position in this form must have appeared a paradox, this writer does not furnish any explanation either of the special nature or the cause of the phenomenon. He lucubrates at large, indeed, in proof of the fact, but without touching the philosophy or the definition of the third order. He insists, against the presumption, that the *tiers-état* is to be found only in France, without fixing what he means by it. Yet there is an explanation, and one which offers the best of guarantees for its truth. It resolves all the special institutions themselves—*bourgeoisie, tiers-état*, parliament, public prosecutor—into particular aspects or results of the same fundamental hypothesis.

This is, that the *tiers-état*, or "third estate," is no other than the Gallic race. The two successive conquests of the nation by different foreigners were the foundation of the complemental estates. The clergy represented the Roman dominion by the language, the canon law, and the municipal institutions; the *noblesse* were the Franks, with their feudal institutions, which consisted in little else than the negation of the Roman. The earlier of these elements attained its climax in Charlemagne, who became a Roman emperor not only in title but in despotic power. The dissolution of his empire and the decay of his dynasty gave the ascendency to the feudal and Frankish element. Favoured by the long contests, and the exhaustion thence resulting both to the Frankish individualism and the Roman despotism, the oppressed masses of the nation next began to lift their heads successively in the *communes*, the parliaments, the Gallican church, until they shook off both their oppressors in the convulsion of the Revolution. *Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?* was on that occasion the title of a memorable pamphlet of Abbé Sièyes. He answered: "The whole, the real nation;" but to have been correct, he should have said the Gallic *race*, for this it was that distinguished it from *class* revolutions. The idea was substantially conceived by M. Thierry in combining in the *tiers-état* the *prolétaires* with the *bourgeoisie*.† The

* Hist. de la Civilisation en France, tom. iv.

† In fact, the separation of these elements is subsequent, and merely factitious, embodying nothing of the ethnological distinction which lies at the foundation of the distinction between the three estates. Witness the experience of those sagacious statesmen who would make the subdivision of *bourgeoisie* and *prolétaires*, and so forth, the basis of a new dynasty. They totally misapprehend the genius of their people. The French race will never suffer a class rule among themselves, a power sustained by wealth or birth, or any other test than merit. The best assurance of this is, that they never yet have done so. Throughout the whole history of the race, in France as elsewhere, this resolute hatred of class

Digitized by Google

Gallic race in its integrity was, then, the *tiers-état;* and its organs were for centuries the magistracy and the parliament, who led it forth from both the Roman and feudal thraldoms and traditions.

This was really a situation quite peculiar to France. There were, for instance, in Turkey, only the conquered and the conquerors; the latter being of both the same religion and race. In Spain, the Goths were early expelled or absorbed; the Saracens were conquerors of part of the country, but never up to their expulsion had exercised any direct influence upon the Spanish people by government or religion; the aristocracy was native, and the Roman element coalesced with it, whence the specially deep root which it has struck in this people. Still more broad was the disparity in Germany and England, where the religion and aristocracy, or ruling class, are both native. Accordingly there were here but two divisions, or estates: the Nobles, including the king and the higher clergy; and the Commons, comprising all the rest of the nation. And so trenchant was the duality, that even of the highest nobles the younger sons were held by law to fall forthwith into the Commons. Upon this antagonism accordingly have centred the main facts of our political history; each of the parties endeavouring to wrest as much and to yield as little as possible, but neither of them thinking, or perhaps indeed caring, to subdue the other into closer community. The proof is, that when the Stuarts attempted this compression, both the parties substantially combined to expel them. It is this social dualism that has shaped the English parliament into two distinct houses, of Nobles and of Commons. So with even the judiciary, the division into King's Bench and Common Pleas; the Exchequer at first being not a court but a counting-house, the main matter of concern with the early Norman monarchs. Hence a fallacy, whereinto Mr. Hallam, with others, falls. From the absence of all general legislation by these sovereigns, or indeed any legislation but what related to wresting money, he naïvely concludes* that their power must have been limited, and thus our constitution already far advanced! Alas, this is not the only instance of *ex-post-facto* ingenuity in clothing the nakedness of the past with the rights of the present. In fine, then, even in England there could have been no *tiers-état;* and its two estates, moreover, were but social divisions, founded rather upon property and rank than upon race. The French alone had three parties representing adverse races; and the effort of the undermost, the

rule has been the cause of their interminable quarrelling, their factious divisions, their bloody usurpations, and, as a consequence, their falling under foreign subjection; for they would sooner bear the tyranny of the lowest foreign race than, in their own, a mere precedence of which they could not recognise the title.

* Const. Hist. Eng. vol. i. p. 1.

Digitized by Google

great national party, was unfortunately not to reconcile its rights and interests with those of the others, but by managing its casting vote to get to be the highest,—the whole.

Such accordingly is the constant policy of the magistracy and the parliament; a policy of trimming or timidity that still remains, but a policy of perseverance, of sequence and synthesis. Considered in the light of this threefold play of parties, French history is of all the most instructive and symmetrical. But from the explanation we deduce but one conclusion. It has been said of the old *régime*, that it was a despotism mitigated by *bons mots*. There would be much more truth, though less of epigram, in noting that the real mitigation had been due to *bons magistrats*.

The most illustrious of these was Henri-François d'Aguesseau. He was born into circumstances specially auspicious,—of a *famille de robe*, as the magisterial class were denominated, as distinguished from the churchmen and the swordsmen; and what was better, of a father distinguished in that class for his elegant learning, and public and private virtues. He was also Intendant of Languedoc. From this position, which was a species of provincial governorship, and from the honourable antecedents of the family for generations, he possessed influence that entitled him to hope highly for his son. He applied himself accordingly to prepare his son for this destiny almost from birth. His education was conducted at home, and by himself; diversified, however, by keeping round the pupil some young men of learning, more for intercourse than instruction. So strictly were these rules adhered to by the father, that, as he was obliged to be much from home and moving about in the inspection of his province, he had a travelling-carriage shaped and furnished like a cabinet, in which he took along with him his son and his companions. The order of instruction commenced with language, chiefly, of course, the classical; then proceeded to mathematics; and passed finally to philosophy. This last, however, was confined to Cartesianism, which was at that time as much in vogue in France as the Baconian philosophy still is in England. Moreover Cartesianism was itself limited by the scrupulous jealousy of religion; the father having been, as the son too proved himself, a rigorous though liberal Catholic.

D'Aguesseau was therefore a nearly complete sample of the results of private education. Yet he manifested none of the bad results usually imputed to it. Though entering on public duties at the age of twenty-one, he displayed all the requisite energy and self-possession. The only trace of his seclusion was a systematic strictness, which imparted to his writings and his conduct a tinge of pedantry. This methodical rigour, to be sure, adds

Digitized by Google

no prestige to his genius; for genius is generally supposed to be allied to irregularity. Shakespeare to most people would not seem half so great had he written with the taste and regularity of Racine. But Shakespeare's uncouthness was not therefore his genius, as Hume seems to imply: and the proof is, that had the Frenchman composed with the same recklessness, his name would very certainly have never reached posterity. So was it also with the refined scrupulosity of D'Aguesseau. This punctiliousness can prejudice but genius of the highest order, to which all education is a secondary aid, and which needs but to be offered the materials for its own development. With lower intellects, on the contrary, instruction is essential. Its results, though excessive, are not therefore in this case faults; for they tend to supplement natural defects, whereas in first-class genius they seem like limitations. But D'Aguesseau having by no means an intellect of that stamp, its extremely methodical character was a gain on the whole, and could in him furnish no objection to the home system of education. We say *in him;* for the question rather concerns persons than systems.

However, to attain his final degree D'Aguesseau had to leave the tuition of his father. The examination included jurisprudence in the largest sense, comprising the canon, the feudal, and the civil laws, which were all in force in France;—a consequence of the coexistence of the three races;—and also the law of nations, which was their philosophic complement. All these he had mastered at the age of one-and-twenty.

He forthwith obtained the office of king's advocate, answering nearly to that of the English attorney-general, and in a few months was farther promoted to the place of advocate-general, the threshold of the magistracy. Here his eloquence sprang forth at once in full maturity, as might have been expected from his hothouse education. The best description of it is conveyed by the term "judicial," as opposed to the coördinate classes given by rhetorical writers, the demonstrative and the deliberative forms. It is dignified in tone, sober in imagery, argumentative even in its ornament, fastidious in taste. His fastidiousness he carried to excess, as we have intimated. Such was his ideal of the magisterial function, and his reverence for the very tribunal of justice, that in the case of a comedian who was party to a suit, he declined uttering the by-name by which he was known publicly. He even apologised for mentioning by name the Jesuit Sanchez, whose writings upon matrimony had become obnoxious. On another occasion, to avoid the word *usury*, he employs the periphrasis of "giving to a sterile metal a fecundity contrary to nature." This reminds one of Shylock's "I make it breed, as well." Such pedantry is in keeping with that trifling

Digitized by Google

of the times, which Molière has delivered to the laughter of posterity.

It was in the ten years during which D'Aguesseau held this office that he produced the most strictly juridical of his writings. For his arguments (*playdoyères*) were always written; though rather, it is said, for the sake of fixing the ideas methodically in his mind than for the sake of committing them to memory. The subjects are mostly of great importance and curious interest, and merit all the learning and the logic bestowed upon them. In these aspects, we would recommend to all ambitious law-students to compare them with the chaos and the commonplace of our Reports, as well the "opinions" from the bench as the "arguments" from the bar. One of the cases is of a nature so tragical, it contains a story so eventful and an issue so mysterious, that we offer a brief abstract of it to the general reader. The trial is still a by-word at the French bar, both on this account and also for its long duration. It lasted four years, which was a prodigy in France, where there was a Public Minister, and where there was *not* a Court of Chancery.

A gentleman of Narbonne, named De la Pavardière, after being absent for some months, returned to his residence the 15th August 1697. His arrival took place in the evening, after sunset. When looked for next morning, he could not be found. Sinister rumours arose among the neighbours, to the effect that he must have been murdered by his wife, assisted by a person who was known to be her paramour, the prior of the monastery of Mezeray. The king's attorney of the district lodged information, without waiting, as with us, for an approver or grand jury. Investigation, or, according to the technical phrase, the *instruction*, commenced. All seemed confirmatory of the first suspicions,—the testimony of witnesses, the disappearance of the wife, the blood-stains on the floor and the walls of the husband's chamber. There were two female servants: being arrested, they confessed, after some hesitation, that the murder was committed, giving horrible details, and was committed by the hands of the wife and her monastic lover. One of them falling ill, repeated this to her confessor. The prior was arrested, and on the recovery of the sick servant, was confronted with both of them. The latter disavowed all in his presence, and charged the crown attorney with menacing and captious treatment. But no sooner did the holy man turn his back than they repeated the old testimony, retracted their retractation, asked for a second confrontation, and now maintained it to his face.

While the murder thus appeared to have been placed beyond doubt, the murdered man gave signs no less decisive of his existence. Witnesses swore to seeing him; well-known parties

Digitized by Google

received letters from him; affidavits were made by him in person before notaries. The lady also reappeared, and applied for an inquiry into the calumny that had accused her of the murder of her husband. This application being referred to the proper officer, the husband De la Pavardière actually presented himself. On being examined, he gave a full account of both his identity and the incidents of his life, and explained the motives of his absence. The accused triumphed thus far, and insisted on confrontation with the servants still in prison. But these declared they did not recognise their alleged master, and the floodgate of doubt was thrown open anew. The district attorney proposed that the man be arrested and detained, whosoever he might be; but the higher officer refused, and the mystic personage disappeared. In the mean time the accused, that is the wife and her lover, entered an appeal from the whole proceedings; and the attorney also appealed from his superior. So that the public lawyers were brought as parties into the *mêlée*.

While these pleadings were proceeding, the feigned or real husband made himself again heard of from the obscurity of his hiding-place. He offered to return, on getting a safe-conduct to protect him from arrest on a charge of *bigamy lodged against him*. Without minding this advance, the court accorded a new trial, and also reversed the decree of its public prosecutor, arresting him for the arrest which he had inhibited. This decision become known, De la Pavardière reappeared, and gave himself up to the authorities. Thereupon the king ordered the whole affair to be brought before the parliament of Paris. Here it was that it came into the hands of D'Aguesseau, as advocate-general of that body. And never perhaps elsewhere in a legal argument have so much method and lucidity encountered such a labyrinth of subtlety and complication. The conclusion of the conscientious advocate is the most curious. We shall cite it as a sample of his manner, after adding that the issue of the trial was as follows: condemnation of Margaret Mortier, the survivor of the two servants, to the utmost penalty of false testimony; and acquittal of the wife, the husband, and the lover.

Premising that the case as reviewed by the parliament turned upon the point of the identity of Pavardière, we add one extract from the peroration:

"There would be no certainty in the decisions of courts of justice if doubt were to be carried any farther in this matter. For in short, gentlemen, all the grounds of doubt just proposed to you would equally apply to all manner of judicial proof. Where is the indictment in which we may not fear the fraud or the mistake of the parties, the ignorance or guile of the lawyers, the faithlessness or corruption of the witnesses? Thus all these reflections appear to beget doubts, which

Digitized by Google

must be regarded as a common condition, and cannot be applied to a particular case because they are incident alike to all cases. What remains, then, but to deal with human business humanly; to remember that the matter of all such judgments belongs to jurisprudence, in which things are judged of, not according to what they are in themselves, but according to what they appear to be externally; to humble ourselves at the spectacle of the nothingness of knowledge, and, if we may dare say so, of human justice, which in questions of fact is forced to pronounce, not upon the eternal truth of things, but upon their shadows, their semblances, and their appearances? Thus, after having taken all the precautions which the prudence of man could have provided in this matter, let us remember that there is a time for decision, as there is a time for doubt; and that, after having doubted for an entire year, there would perhaps be henceforth as much evil in suspending as there had been in precipitating our decision at an earlier stage. If we are wrong, as we still may be, we are wrong by received rule (*dans les règles*); and we must leave to the Divine judgment the punishment of a crime which it has pleased it to veil in such a manner that it almost seems impossible."

After ten years' service, D'Aguesseau was again promoted, and to the procurator-generalship of the parliament. This was the office of the magistrate proper, and the highest in the state with the exception of the chancellor. Hitherto he had been but consultative and executive; as procurator, he became initiative and administrative. He inspected not only the fiscal administration, but also the management of all the hospitals and other foundations of charity throughout the kingdom; but his special care was the administration of justice, with the conduct and discipline of both the bench and the bar. The larger portion of his works is accordingly composed of three coördinated kinds of composition, named *Enquêtes*, *Requêtes*, and *Mercurials*. The first has its least remote English analogue in the incriminative attributes of the grand jury and the justice of peace. Both prepare information and proof of crime. But while the French officer "takes" it and prosecutes, the English can but receive and "present." The former is an active and public authority, the latter are passive and essentially private; for the spirit or theory of the grand jury is no other than a local deputation of the citizens, admitted to complain, with more authority and order, of the conduct of some among them for whom they once had been responsible. Accordingly they can pursue the complaint no further. They received it from individuals, they transmit to the king's attorney; and thus there are three independent agencies employed in turn: whereas the French officer takes it up himself, prosecutes it through the courts, and pursues it to execution. Both procedures have their opposite advantages or disadvantages according to the standard received

Digitized by Google

in the two countries; the French being the more favourable to the public and the law, the English leaning to the side of the accused and of liberty.

The *requête*, or requisition, in some of its varieties corresponds to the still more vague English term "motions,"—more especially motions in arrest of judgment or for a new trial; also to quash a judgment or conviction by default; or, in France, in civil cases, to compel courts of last resort to review their own judgments and rectify their errors. *Requêtes* were likewise presented to the king through his council. But the great difference from English practice is, that whereas the "motions" are oral, and still ruder than speeches on the merits, the *requêtes* were always written and elaborate arguments. Few people would imagine the influence of this contrast upon the legal learning and literature of the two countries. As to the *mercurials*, which were discourses pronounced on the reopening of the courts at the end of vacations, and addressed to the bench as well as bar upon the duties before them, there is absolutely nothing of the kind in English usage. Those of D'Aguesseau are deemed models in their kind, and even the masterpieces of his own writings.

It was also in this office that D'Aguesseau had his first contests with the Ultramontane faction for the Gallican church. The most famous of the occasions was a revival of the dispute between the Jansenists and Jesuits, or more strictly the Molinists, when the church led the dotage of Louis XIV., through his Jesuit confessor, to side with the latter. The parliament, with its habitual tactic as now explained, took the part of the weaker, the Jansenists. The people followed the parliament from the same instinct of nationality, and also from a love of theological disputation; for this appears to be, in the Celtic race, what fanaticism or *prophetism* is elsewhere.*

On the occasion in question, D'Aguesseau, as usual, led the parliament in favour of the Jansenists against the king. Or he would more correctly have been said to *head* than lead it; for the policy of that body was simply one of inertia. Its means of action was persistent inaction. It refused to register, though ordered by the king, the papal bull or brief against the eternal "five propositions." Not on the merits of the censure, of which

* As witness, too, the Irish. The substitute for this in the Teutonic is theological sectarianism. The pettiest people of the latter race has produced more religious sects than all the nations of Celtic origin taken together. The latter do but elaborate new *arguments* for old doctrines; the others sap the old doctrines by new *interpretations*. Religion with the Teuton is a dictate of conscience; with the Celt it is very much a dogma of controversy. Thus the French people, from the days of the Scholastics to those of the Jansenists, were always eager for such disputes; and in the Spaniards the same yearning could be suppressed but by the Inquisition, and hence perhaps its terrors in that country.

Digitized by Google

it had not a word to say; nor in support of the Jansenists, with regard to whom it was alike silent. Their plea was, that to give sanction to this papal dictation would both infringe the king's own political prerogatives and compromise the liberties of the Gallican church. These famous "liberties" D'Aguesseau defined on the occasion to be "the right of following the common law of Christianity; of being ruled by the canons of the church, not by the will of the popes; of receiving from them nothing opposed to the *national* manners, and even acknowledging no other than the national usages in matters of religious police and discipline." The *Grand Monarque* persisted, threatened a *lit de justice*, and sent for the president of the parliament, the noble Harlay. "We ought," he remonstrated, "to treat the popes with all regards." "Yes, sire," replied the sturdy magistrate, "we ought to kiss their feet, but to tie their hands." The *mot* condensed the spirit of the life-long policy of the French parliament; a policy dissembling to superficial eyes by an air of servility its real importance in French history. The body would, however, have had to yield in this, as it did in other contests, for the time, had not death come opportunely to relieve them of the sovereign.

They followed up the triumph by quashing the testament procured from the dying monarch by the Jesuits to the same effect, and which admitted to the throne and regency his legitimated children, who were to be obedient to the dictates of the church. These the parliament set aside for the Duke of Orleans, who promised to be equally attentive to *their* wishes, and adopted their leader D'Aguesseau as his counsellor. Nor need this mutual confidence throw any stain on our virtuous magistrate. That gifted prince was not at first the *fanfaron des crimes* that his uncle used to call him with profound sagacity. Indeed, it is the hypocrite, and not the *fanfaron*, that is, from first to last, the true criminal at the core.

To this period also of the life of D'Aguesseau belong some non-professional and interesting writings. They consist of four "Letters of Instruction" (*instruction*), addressed to his sons, now advancing towards maturity, on the functions and the duties of the lawyer and the magistrate. They are models for the higher ranges of political education, though scarcely parliamentary as now conceived. They also contain a succinct treatise on jurisprudence, of which the main division appears striking for the date. The first part is devoted to private or civil law; the second, to public or political law; the third and last, which is but outlined, would embrace the law of nations, or, as the author rectifies the phrase, the "law *between* nations." This, in fact, would be correct had he intended a sneer; which, however, was

Digitized by Google

habitually impossible to his austere gravity. The law in question is as yet a mere compact "between" nations; the law *of* nations lies above them, and remains for future science. This educational group of tracts has its fitting crown in a composition which was at once a teaching and a tribute. It is "On the life and death, the character and manners, of my father," which he in his turn offers as a model to his own children. This father had just died at the age of eighty-one, and had continued to the last a stay and counsellor to the son in the concerns of his public duties as well as of his private fortunes. For wisdom, acquirements, simplicity, and virtue, he was, in fact, a parent fully worthy of such a son, and a character like those which fancy paints as proper to ancient Rome.

D'Aguesseau, who was now in his forty-eighth year, was advanced by the regent to the supreme place of chancellor. Upon such an elevation tribulation followed naturally. The chancellor was the link between the sovereign and the parliament, and thus a sort of buffer used to deaden their collisions. One of the most violent of these continual encounters soon demanded this uncomfortable use of D'Aguesseau.

Hitherto his chief difficulties were with theologians. The parliament would seem to have given its attention to scarcely any other political concern. This curious fact is in strict harmony with the explanation we gave above as to the hold which the religious and Roman element maintained on the minds of the Gallic race. This more fundamental of the two foreign strata had moreover received a fresh stimulus in the late reign, through the agency of the mistresses and confessors of Louis XIV.; above all, the vigorous hand and Gallic sympathies of Richelieu had strangled its natural rival, the Germanic aristocracy. Relieved of the Huguenots, the Ultramontanists had fallen, at the period in question, with all their strength upon the ambiguous position of the Gallicans. Hence the singular preoccupation of the parliament with theology; and this in cavillings so puerile as would imply imbecility, had we no knowledge of the tide of meaning that swelled beneath. But the contest was now varied by a rally of the *noblesse*, who, with the instinct of their race for more substantial interests, expected to retrieve their fallen order by means of money. The invasion of the national industry now devised is to be found in the history of the "Mississippi bubble."

The details of this mania are familiar to British readers. What it concerns us to note on the present occasion is, that the scheme was opposed from the first by D'Aguesseau. The chancellor continued, as before, to lead the parliament; and this body refused to register the edicts of the sovereign, who was in his

Digitized by Google

minority, for the extension to Louisiana of the operations of the Scotch adventurer. But the regent was determined to push the project through—determined by the pressure of his own licentious wants, and the still more greedy, if not needy, urgency of the nobles. And why may we not allow that both parties were also actuated by an honest confidence in good to the country generally, since hope might well have been infused into more experienced financiers by the prodigious success of the first trial-scheme of Law? However, D'Aguesseau, being considered as the chief obstacle, was removed from office, and exiled to his country-seat. This, however, did but confirm the parliament in their resistance, by adding personal or corporate to patriotic motives. D'Argenson, who, as lieutenant of police, knew their foibles, and who, like many energetic men, had slight scruples, received the seals, in the hope that he would bring those *bourgeois* to order. All his audacity and browbeating, however, fell impotent on their inertia; and they were banished *en masse*, for the first time in history, in the train of their chief, but to a more remote locality. There the exiles amused themselves with truly French gaiety. D'Aguesseau, on his part, employed his forced leisure in writing on the subject in which he could not act, and produced a short treatise on political economy. In fine, the regent, Law, and Co. had Paris to themselves, to prosecute their golden speculations without opposition.

When the lapse of two or three years brought the frenzy to a crisis, and the speculators saw the rising fury of a plundered people, the best expedient they could think of was the recall of D'Aguesseau. It was proposed by Law, who also went with the messenger, and offered to the chancellor a hundred thousand livres to indemnify his loss in the general depreciation. The money was declined, but the recall was accepted; and the exile returned in their company to Paris. For this he has been censured by his too fastidious countrymen. He should not, said they, have returned in the company or at the call of the foreign adventurer who was the cause of his disgrace; he thus appeared to be his passive tool. This censure is neither fair in judgment nor correct in fact. In the first place, the adventurer was only an adjunct, a volunteered adjunct, to the official messenger. Then, his presence in that capacity was rather a compliment, a tribute paid by vice (if we must call it so) to virtue: D'Aguesseau, in returning, was not the tool of Law; it is Law who, on the contrary, was the trophy of D'Aguesseau. But besides, what had these miserable personal punctilios to do with a man of his virtue and patriotism, in comparison, at least, with the service of his country at a moment when he saw her on the brink of ruin? He returned, and set to work with his old zeal. But the

Digitized by Google

time was too late, the patient too far gone; and Law withdrew some time after in secret from the country.

This money interlude over, theology returned in the shape of the everlasting bull "*Unigenitus.*" The infamous Dubois, raised from pander to the regent to the see of the noble Fenelon and a cardinal's hat, brought his wily influence to bear upon the government; and the government were now able to obtain the assent of the recalled chancellor. D'Aguesseau has been blamed for this also, we think unreasonably. He opposed the registration when demanded by Louis XIV., and when the bigotry of a doting despot would have made the triumph dangerous. Now the government were on the other side, or at least neutral, and so there was less peril to the "Gallican" or other liberties. It is from inattention to this change in the conditions that D'Aguesseau has been charged with deserting his principles; a charge so frequently made by men who can perceive in party politics but the shibboleth of the sect, and not the substantial requisites of the situation.

The parliament, still in exile, would, it was not doubted, follow him, especially when this was the occasion of recalling them. But, on the contrary, they now resisted only the more obstinately in consequence of his change, as they did formerly for his exile. Resort was then had to an adjunct of the body, the remnant of its Frankish origin, which was named the Grand Council; but even this was now so Gallican as to reject the measure. The regent, however, was not to be put down. Three days after he went in person, led officially by D'Aguesseau and flanked by all the feudal magnates of the court, who had retained their original votes in this assembly. The proposition was supported by the chancellor in a discourse. The regent then proclaimed that the suffrages were free, by way of furnishing a cover for retreat to *bourgeois* vanity. But only one voted for the registration purely; two or three with a remonstrance; all assented to doing it by *express order* of the royal minor. Some even dared to speak against it. One of these, named Perelle, was so provoking as to induce the chancellor to interrupt and ask him where he found such principles. "I found them," he said, "in the writings of the *late* chancellor, D'Aguesseau."

The government, however, felt that this sanction of the Grand Council, extorted as it was in fact and irregular in law, would of course be disregarded by the parliament. It was therefore proposed to abolish this body. D'Aguesseau was shocked, and instantly resigned, withdrawing to his country-seat, the place of his former exile, where he remained some four years more. In this interval the regent and Dubois had both died, and were succeeded by Louis XV. himself and another cardinal. The

Digitized by Google

latter, Fleury, brought D'Aguesseau back once more, though upon terms scarcely creditable to the chancellor this time. But he was now aged; and after a life's enjoyment, office becomes, like gambling, intoxication, and other vices, when once habitual, a condition for which honour will, like life, be placed in jeopardy. We gladly drop a veil, then, on this infirmity of a great character, to close with some remarks on the productions of his second exile.

These were of the most diversified description, such as letters on the Creation; on Aristotle's definition of tragedy; on the ancient lawgivers Theseus, Romulus, &c.; on the metaphysics of jurisprudence, and a number of other subjects. The "Meditations" are of all the most extended and elaborate, and have been the most popular of all his works abroad, being translated into several European languages. They have something of the nature of their Cartesian namesake, a school of which the author was a zealous disciple. It is not strange, then, however curious it may seem in a jurist, to find him criticising Newton's theory of gravitation.*

To such universality in the fields of positive knowledge D'Aguesseau further added an acquaintance with most of the languages of modern and ancient Europe, and with the Hebrew, Syriac, and others of the East. In both departments he was deemed a sort of oracle in foreign countries. Nothing perhaps could show better this reputation for various learning than a question so remote from his professional pursuits as one which was addressed to him by our own Royal Society. It was not, as the reader will readily foresee, respecting the defects of the Newtonian system; was it, then, upon the regulation of the legal profession, or upon the reform or codification of the law? No; the information sought from the great French jurist by the English Academy was simply about the "calendar"!

The production of D'Aguesseau the most useful to his own country was his grand initiation of the codification of its laws. This vast project he commenced towards his seventieth year,

* The reader may be pleased to hear him briefly in this character. "Newton's whole system," says he, "turns on the supposition of two forces, the rectilineal and the centripetal, which do not proceed the one from the other,—which are completely independent,—which cannot, consequently, be reduced to the unity of a sole principle and a uniform cause—which conflict with each other, on the contrary, and tend to destroy each other mutually; but which, however, have a relation to each other so necessary, that the first without the second, and the second without the first, would be absolutely useless: so that it is plain the right-lined motion has been *imagined* but in order to modify the centripetal, as reciprocally the centripetal has been *invented* but to the end of correcting, in its turn, the right-lined movement. . . . . But it is hard to believe that the primal motion was a compound one. It is an assumption entirely at variance with the idea which we have of the simplicity of the ways of God, the author of nature, which converge all of them to unity." *Œuvres*, Pardessus' edition, tom. xvi. p. 124.

Digitized by Google

and prosecuted on his last return from exile. The result in part compensates us for the price which he paid for the opportunity; for out of his office as chancellor he could do nothing, as his plan was to give sanction by judicial decision to legal principles as they were drawn out and developed by his assistants. This judge-codification (as Bentham might have called it) was much more effective than it would have been if more ostentatious. We have not space remaining to give the least idea of the magnitude of the task or the extent of the execution, and can only add the three great divisions of the programme. They were, (1) the subject-matter itself of jurisprudence; (2) the form of juridical procedure, or the "style;" (3) the conduct and discipline of the officers of justice, both judicial and executive. Thus he discusses the substantive, the formal, and the instrumental elements. The contemplation of this noble work, which was, however, but the mere crown and completion of a long life of active service and of universal study, cannot but call to mind the similar project of an English chancellor; who, though with perhaps less obstruction, put his office to other uses, and left his project, in this as other things, in the magniloquence of a mere programme.

Yet there is still a higher testimony to the character of the minister and the man. It is that, in the quarter of a century during which D'Aguesseau held the seals, there was not issued in France a great work upon any subject of which he was not more or less promoter and patron. Says his biographer, "Pendant tout le cours de son ministère, il ne parut presque pas d'ouvrage important auquel il n'eut contribué par sa protection et ses lumières." Thus he was not satisfied with being the mere condescending patron, but also lent his powers to his *protégés* as assistant. The immortal work of Domat he paid the expense of publishing. He did almost the same for the scarcely less celebrated *History of the Roman Jurisprudence* of Terasson. An obscure student from a remote province once addressed him a letter, describing the project of a work upon the Pandects, which he was sure of executing had he but the means of subsistence in the mean time, and of publishing when it was done. He received forthwith an answer, desiring him to come to Paris, and present himself to the chancellor. The means were found, the work was published; the author was placed where other such works could be best produced—in the chair of law-professor of the University of Orleans. This author was Pothier, whose treatise on "contracts" is a text-book of principles with even English lawyers. D'Aguesseau aided even Diderot in setting on foot the *Encyclopédie*.

Yet the man who was thus liberal, nay vigilant, to help others in publishing, had never published any of the multitude

Digitized by Google

of his own writings. When they happened to appear in his lifetime, it was through the agency of others; and all were not collected till after his death. There can, however, be no doubt that he designed them for the press. This, indeed, would be evinced by the mere polish of the style, upon which, in conclusion, we subjoin the following delicate remarks of M. Villemain. "*N'ayant pas cet instinct profond de naturel qui appartenait aux vrais hommes de génie de son temps, D'Aguesseau eut plutôt les artifices que les inspirations de l'éloquence, et fut un écrivain habile, mais non pas un grand écrivain.*" The reasoning of the criticism is admirable; but the application is far from being just. The parliamentary orator and academical rhetorician overlooked the distinction, above noted on this point, between the eloquence he alludes to and the judicial species, which, as essentially ratiocinative, must appear to be artificial. The eloquence here in place is one of arguments, not "inspirations."

It is more difficult to pronounce generally on the genius of D'Aguesseau. His faculties were too well balanced, or were disciplined to too much symmetry, to leave those angularities of dazzling excess, or those startling defects, through which the character is easier seized and analysed, and yields the mixture of shade and light by which to picture it to others. In the mind as in the morals of this most accomplished magistrate the only striking fault, if it can be called striking, is a tame or level faultlessness; and, on the other hand, the highest excellence is not greatness, but completeness. He, in short, is *totus, teres atque rotundus.* This peculiarity excuses or accounts for both the baldness and the meagreness of the tardy biographer, which are extreme even for the literature and philosophy of a lawyer. What the biographer has not done in the course of two volumes, it would be even presumptuous to attempt here or now. We shall, however, try to designate the intellect of D'Aguesseau at least by its poles, so to speak, of strength and weakness. And as this is done most popularly by means of contrast or comparison, we shall briefly compare him, in those aspects respectively, to two supreme and celebrated representatives of the English judicature, namely Chancellor Eldon and Chief-Justice Mansfield. The comparison may also, perhaps, throw some light upon the mental peculiarities of these great men themselves; a light which is still needed in the case of one of them at least.

The main intellectual weakness imputed to D'Aguesseau was doubt or indecision in his judicial functions, and a pedantic refinement in his mental conduct generally. Saint-Simon, in his full-length portrait of the chancellor, paints this foible in the strongest colours: "*C'était un accouchement pour lui de se déterminer.*" And he adds, that the same prim and formal method

Digitized by Google

was applied in his writings, the smallest business-note being repeatedly re-written. But Saint-Simon, it is known, was the very incarnation of feudal animosity towards that *bourgeoisie* of whom D'Aguesseau was the principal organ and ornament, and thus was led to darken and even distort the truth. What truth there might have been in the criticism is, with his habitual modesty, confirmed by the chancellor himself, where, on occasion of the discussion above referred to of Newton's doctrine, he concludes, with, however, it may be, a touch of irony, "that the subject was perhaps beyond his powers, which somewhat resemble those attributed to matter by Mr. Newton, and consist but in a species of inertia or indolence, more capable of resistance than activity." But this characteristic preëminently belongs to the judicial mind, at least when the resistance is sustained as by D'Aguesseau; when it proceeds from a true equipoise of principles.

In few juridical or social questions can the point at issue be simple; it must turn on complex considerations, and introduce a multitude of principles. These must consequently be all present to the mind for comparison where the process is not shortened for the judge by the law-maker; for the task of positive law is to strike this balance upon a general view of the relations of society. This abridgment must be wanting in the judgments of equity, which means, at least in England, the supplement of law. And such was largely the state of all French jurisprudence; where not only were there constantly three contending systems, but equity, moreover, was never severed from the law. It *was*, in truth, the law as developed by the nation from the historical conflicts of the canon and the feudal. D'Aguesseau, then, had to decide between all three as a judge, and, moreover, upon principles of reason and philosophy. Hence the slowness which, to persons unaware of these necessities, appeared to be a mark of mental weakness, or at least pedantry. The sources of like slowness are constantly found in men of fertile minds, who are apt to be comparatively slow of pen and speech. They have to make a selection, and from matter ever new; whereas when scanty and familiar, the stock is produced rapidly. According to Swift's image, people come with less facility from a church when the building is crowded than when it is half empty.

This dilatory habit of D'Aguesseau's mind Lord Eldon had notoriously and in an exaggerated form. The cause must, however, have been different in nature as well as in degree in the English chancellor. His special province, as explained, was pure equity, unaided by the mixture of legal rule or principle. Discretion was thus much less trammeled, and was more dependent

Digitized by Google

for the premises of judgment on the mind itself. But Eldon's mind also was singularly void of every thing like principle, whether legal or logical. He knew nothing of any other law than the English; was a man of one book, and that—*Coke upon Lyttelton.* Of science or philosophy he had not a tincture. It is said that even his general reading never went beyond the Bible. He once thought it worth while to announce from the bench that he had been reading the *Paradise Lost.* No doubt his knowledge of the native jurisprudence was rarely equalled; but his Chancery jurisdiction was in theory an appeal against the principles, or rather rules, of the common law to deeper and controlling principles. And Eldon looked for these deeper principles to two sources alone—*the actual facts of each particular case, and the resulting impression on his mind, which he called conscience.* It was the tentative manipulation and adjustment of these two factors that, by its slow procedure, caused the excessive doubting.

This solution is best verified by showing that it may also explain the other foibles of the man and the judge, and even the mistakes of the critics respecting them. For instance, the couplet of certain wags in parliament:

> "With metaphysic art his speech he planned,
> And said what nobody could understand."

The speech could not have well been greater nonsense than the epigram. It is not metaphysic art that men plan with; art is not metaphysical. Besides, Lord Eldon was as destitute of all plan as of metaphysics, and as destitute of both as any other man in England. Metaphysicians are much more often dogmatists than doubters; and dogmatists respecting the abstractions of their analyses, not, as Eldon was, respecting the impressions of his early education. Witness Hume, Bentham, and the rest of the tribe. Eldon was not farther from speculation than from method. The only thing he ever attempted to "plan" was the famous imitation of the eloquence of Sheridan; which consisted of an insane jumble brought together, says Lord Campbell, from "the Bible, *Joe Miller*, and the *Elegant Extracts.*" His success on this occasion apprised his usual shrewdness of his utter incapacity for composition of any kind. In short, in striking contrast to the elegant D'Aguesseau, he never could compose a compound sentence grammatically; not, however, we repeat, because he planned, or was metaphysical, but because he never planned at all. His tentative manipulation of particulars was so minute, that it seemed to mark acuteness, and so metaphysics. But a greater blunder could not have been made.

Equally confirmatory is the explanation which the chancellor

Digitized by Google

himself used to plead for his hesitating frame of mind. He could not, he said, trust to the statements of the lawyers, and sought to go behind them into the facts himself. And this naïve apology is turned into a eulogy. As if it were the usage of judges to trust them! as if the statements were themselves not professedly defective, and even quite antagonistic exhibitions of the facts! To supply these opposing views is the business of the lawyers; the business of the judge is by their means to find the truth, which must be of necessity *between*, and not "behind" them; to strike the average, to find the principle of the particular case, as the law-maker does that of the general situation. Now this task of the judge supposes processes of logic, and also principles of natural law, where, as in equity, there is no positive law. But both these requisites being absolutely wanting in Lord Eldon, he was thrown for his resources upon the bare facts, which he was too sagacious to accept from the lawyers, and too conscientious not to seek to sound himself. They were thus his sole materials for forming a judgment. Moreover he could not rest content with any part of them, as he could deduce nothing logically from their consequences or their conflicts. He took them, not for signs of the law, but for its *substance*, which seemed therefore incomplete till every detail was considered, and he had applied his mind by a sort of physical contact to the whole mass.

It is the dark unreasoned result of this groping about in the facts that he used to call his conscience and avow as his criterion. Hence, again, the well-known frequency of his appeals to this tribunal; not from cant or hypocrisy, as has been charged so often. Indeed, even his accusers do not question the legitimacy of this personal "forum;" though detached from the influence of local custom, there is nothing more monstrous. A judge deciding by his conscience would be a despot in detail, and infinitely worse than a despotic ruler. It therefore is not from his "conscience" that Lord Eldon really judged, but from the aggregate impression of the facts upon his mind; and if to this he gave the name of conscience, the fair conclusion should have been, not that he meant to deceive, but that he shared in a sentiment which even the indulgence, nay praise, accorded him proves to be national. It is, in fact, an exaggeration of the specialty above explained, of viewing our jurisprudence and public life in general not so much from the social or collective as from the individual aspect.

It was the same close adhesion to the positive and actual that gave a taint of bigotry to Eldon's conservatism. To him the institutions and laws of the country were a structure of mere facts, a mass physical, and therefore fragile, kept together

Digitized by Google

by the mere force of cohesion. Without knowledge of the past, or ideal of the possible, he held this fabric to be part of the eternal frame of nature. He thus resisted, with what otherwise would be a savage cruelty, the abolition, for example, of capital punishment for the slightest crimes. It would have been a stone, perhaps a corner-stone, detached from the sacred edifice. So through his whole life he fell back on the impressions of his early days, upon which he always dwelt with a sort of superstition; but the rehearsal of them showed a vulgar nature. Thus, for instance, the famous motto encountered on the stage-coach, which made him, he hints broadly, Lord-Chancellor of England, and was the vindication and rule of his whole life, betrays the same concrete misconception of his functions. In the *sat cito si sat bene* he understood by *bene* the attainment of the bare fact of justice or the law. But this is not justice *in relation* to a party made to wait for years, until he has been ruined in consequence. The motto leaves out wholly the importance of *time*, which is an element in all value, nay the "staff" of life itself, and what is more, the very essence of the charge against him which he seeks to answer. How well, accordingly, has D'Aguesseau declared, in a passage cited, that to delay decision beyond a certain limit would be as real an injustice as to precipitate it at the outset!

Thus, then, were our two chancellors strikingly opposed in the very qualities in which they most seemed to resemble each other. The delay and hesitation proceeded in the one but from the very multitude of *principles* to be arrayed; in the other, from the multitude of *facts* to be amassed. But if the greater abuse was a virtue in Lord Eldon, the lesser and more logical cannot be weakness in D'Aguesseau.

The point on which a comparison with Lord Mansfield may illustrate D'Aguesseau's powers is the Frenchman's forte of elegant argumentation. By these it was that the Scotch adventurer made his way in a strange country, without sympathy or indulgence, but rather against them, by dint of sheer merit. His genius is quite happily hit off by Horace Walpole, in comparing him with the greatest of his adversaries, Chatham. "Pitt," says the lively writer, "could only *attack;* Murray could only *defend.*" And of the latter he adds, that he "*refined* too much and could *wrangle* too little for a popular assembly." Nothing could be more exact than both the traits. The latter evinces the eloquence of Murray to have been, not the demonstrative or the debating, but the judicial. And the power of argument appropriate to the bench is also the cause of excellence in defence.

D'Aguesseau was more favoured than any man whose train-

Digitized by Google

ing is that of a mere advocate, by his position of French magistrate, which made him neither wholly defender nor prosecutor, but in general a reviewing power, and thus obliged him to reason on a larger field. He accordingly far exceeded Murray in this, and also in eloquence; though scarcely perhaps in genius. Besides, the French magistrate had had no complete model; Lord Mansfield avowedly copied D'Aguesseau. And he did this not merely in his eloquence and tastes, but in the highest achievements of his public life—his law reforms.

Art. VIII.—PEASANT LIFE IN RUSSIA.

Récits d'un Chasseur. Par Ivan Tourgueneff. Traduits du Russe par H. Delaveau. Chez Dentre, Libraire-Editeur au Palais Royal. Paris, 1858.

Scènes de la Vie russe. Par Ivan Tourgueneff. Traduites par M. X. Marmier. Librairie de Hachette et Cie. Paris, 1858.

Scènes de la Vie russe. Par Ivan Tourgueneff. Traduites du Russe par Louis Viardot. Deuxième Série. Librairie de Hachette et Cie. Paris, 1858.

In the beginning of the year 1854, when the Russian war was a subject of universal interest, and any publication on Russia was eagerly received, a book appeared in Paris with this title: *Mémoires d'un Seigneur russe* ("Memoirs of a Russian Nobleman; or, a Picture of the present Situation of the Nobles and Peasants in Russia, with an Introduction"). It was published by Hachette, in the *Bibliothèque des Chemins de Fer.* M. Marmier, whose European reputation had given currency to the name of Gogol by his translations of some fragments of that writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, admired the work, and many were astonished at the refined and delicate delineations of character and scenery, so striking even through the medium of a translation. Speculations naturally arose as to the author of a work which lifted for the first time the thick veil that concealed the east of Europe from the west. People talked, and made inquiries, the result of which was that it had been first published in a volume at Moscow, in 1852; but some portions of it had previously appeared in separate fragments in a literary magazine or review published at Moscow, and called *The Muscovite, or the News of Moscow.* Each fragment consisted of one of the adventurous wanderings of a sportsman. Surprise was naturally created that so much truth as to the existing abuses and institutions of a

Digitized by Google

country known to be subjected to severe censorship, should be allowed to circulate; but it was discovered that the subdued manner and peculiarly undeclamatory style of the writer had so completely succeeded in veiling his intention, that the censor had never found out the general ideas that underlay the whole. When the fragments were collected, however, and the government became aware of the real purpose of the work, the author was first sent to prison for two months, and then exiled to his own estate for two years; the censor was sentenced to two years' imprisonment to sharpen his perceptions for the future. It has been stated in the preface to the second translation that the first Russian edition has been long exhausted, and no second had been allowed to appear up to last year.

The French translation, which had first made the book known, satisfied neither the author nor his Russian readers; a second appeared in 1858, by M. Delaveau, with the author's approbation, under the original title, *Narratives of a Sportsman*, by Ivan Tourgueneff. The preface contains a warm protest by the author (taken from a Russian journal) against the blunders and wilful alterations of his first translator; but as the work has been read and admired in spite of these drawbacks, the impartial reader may conclude that its merit consists chiefly in the substance and plot of the book, though no doubt the style and execution must greatly enhance its value to those who can read it in the original.

The present translation* has not only the author's approbation, but contains several passages that had been prudently withheld in the original, and which must add to its value, as their suppression is a presumption in favour of the exactness of their representations.

The narrative is that of a noble Russian landed proprietor, who professes a passion for shooting and deer-stalking: we find no mention of what is termed hunting in England. This propensity leads him to wander far and wide in search of game, chiefly in the governments of Orel and Kalonga (about the middle of European Russia, to the south of Moscow). Returning to his own domicile in Orel to sleep is of course quite out of the question; he is sometimes sixty or eighty miles distant; he therefore trusts to chance for his night's lodging, being sometimes hospitably entertained by a landed proprietor, sometimes by a serf who has acquired a house by his energy and good management, and pays a high *abrok* (duty-money) to his owner instead of working on his estate. Another time he is surprised by a

* M. Delaveau has published several very interesting articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, with fragments from the Russian poets, and accounts of their lives; thus giving to the public a key to new modes of thought and expression.

Digitized by Google

storm, and takes shelter in the hut of a forester, a serf who guards his master's woods; again, he goes to an independent miller, who has bought a serf-wife because she can read and write. One of the most attractive and poetical scenes in the whole series, is the description of a night spent in a broad grassy valley in the government of Toula, where the sportsman, after losing his way, reaches a prairie, and finds, just as the sun has set, several boys established for the night to guard a herd of horses. The heat in summer is so oppressive that it is the custom in those provinces to drive the horses to graze all night, which saves them from the torment of the gad-flies and the scorching sun. This custom affords a great treat to the village boys, who spend the night in relating to each other the ghost-stories current in their village, while their supper is cooking over a fire. The sportsman, pretending to sleep, listens, and observes their faces; the warm summer night, freshened by the light breeze, the starry firmament, the quiet animals grazing so close to him that he can hear them breathe, the singularity and interesting character of some of the children as it comes out in their conversation, the varying tints of the landscape from the setting sun to early dawn, are painted like a Claude. On another occasion he is detained at a post-house, and meets with a landed proprietor who has been ruined, partly in consequence of his love for a neighbour's serf, which brings him into collision with the law. Again, he gives an account of two neighbouring proprietors and the management of their serfs.

Each expedition brings out some incident of Russian life or dialogue; each brings before the reader, institutions, characters, and a state of manners entirely unknown to him; illustrative of a whole country in which an ordinary visitor might travel from the White to the Black Sea, and discover nothing but drawing-rooms, well-dressed ladies and gentlemen, and very dirty inns. We should give but a slight idea of the service rendered by this book to the Englishman, were we to say that it gives him a much deeper insight into the state of Russia than he could ever attain by travelling in that country. Nor should we even do it justice if we said that it conveys the same sort of knowledge of Russia which popular English fiction—Miss Austen's novels, for example—conveys of England. It does a great deal more for us than this. The knowledge it conveys could never be attained at first hand except by a thorough mastery of Russian, one of the most difficult of the European languages, and by making use of that knowledge in the huts of the serfs as well as in the drawing-rooms of the upper classes. Popular English fiction like Miss Austen's, introduces us only to that phase of English life which cultivated foreigners can most easily apprehend; this book

Digitized by Google

takes us into the very heart of many phases of society, we never could have studied for ourselves.

That the work is a sign of the times in a political point of view is certain; but it must not be supposed that all Russia has been transformed within the last few years, since Nicholas died and Alexander was crowned. Numerous have been the throes and subterranean groanings that have for years betrayed, what must burst forth whenever any vent should be found. For the last thirty years Russian writers have been inspired by hatred of existing abuses, and a yearning for improvement. Pushkin, for example, who was born at the end of the last century, was one of the first writers who really knew how to develop all the richness and capabilities of the language. He wrote satires against Nicholas, and was persecuted by him in the early years of that reign. Again, there are Gogol's incomparable dramas, the writings of Lermontof, Felt, and Tourchef, Greboyadoff, Soltikoff, Wikrussoff, Akrusof, and many others. In fact, it would be difficult to name a writer of talent within the above-named period who has not been excited and inspired by the same causes as Ivan Tourgueneff, though none have presented so complete and graphic a picture to Europe. Some were banished, or had their career arrested in various ways. Poverty laid them open to temptation, and no means were neglected to draw them into dissipation, especially drinking. In many cases they fell.

Still a shade of progress since the last century may be discerned even in the proceedings of government. Civilisation, by which we mean a fuller development of human faculties, was creeping on underground; but, like a plant whose root may be full of life and vigour, it spreads long concealed beneath the surface, till all at once a sunbeam gives it an impulse, and it starts forth into open daylight. Let us hope that Alexander II. may be that sunbeam.

It is difficult for us to appreciate sufficiently the courage required to exhibit the miseries of the serf in all their varied shades at the time when this work appeared, — the *régime* of Nicholas in all its vigour, backed by his old Russian party, and Siberia in the distance. The impression left on the mind is one of deep disgust at slavery; yet (and this adds to the value of the representation) no fantastic or even flattering picture is drawn of the serfs. The effect is not produced by ascribing to them fictitious virtues or imaginary graces. Ivan Tourgueneff has simply drawn from the life characters and incidents as they presented themselves to the eye of a close observer. His talent is essentially dramatic; his personages are known by their actions and their conversation. Often a sigh, a look, a gesture, betrays much; and even their silence is not without a meaning.

Digitized by Google

He never analyses his characters; they are completely unconscious. His subject has probably suggested to him the most poetical manner of delineating human beings, who lose much of their grace and simplicity by self-contemplation.

As it is our principal purpose in the present paper to make our readers in some degree acquainted with this very remarkable book, offering only such general comments of our own as a somewhat closer acquaintance with the subject than most Englishmen possess, may seem to render desirable, we shall make no apology for extracting freely from its most characteristic scenes.

We give first a very abridged account of the first chapter, more as a specimen of serf life than of the author's manner, which is much more minute in its details. Every chapter contains some incident peculiar to the condition of the serfs, but which always appears to come in by chance. The author's delight in the varied aspects of nature; his ardent pursuit of blackcocks, partridges, woodcocks, and wild-ducks,—are the ostensible motives for his wanderings and his relation of them; and, in truth, his landscape-painting is so beautiful and exact, he brings before one the country he describes so completely, that the reader is at no loss to understand how the unlucky censor's attention was diverted from the dangerous spirit of the stories, as in looking at a beautiful insect we are apt to forget the sting. But no detached specimens can do justice to Ivan Tourgueneff's work, because each scene is but one aspect of a varied and complete whole, a fragment of one large picture; one sketch helps us to understand the next. The work has also another value. It is probable that the greatest event of this century, the liberation of 21,000,000 of human beings (the number given by statistics), will entirely change, or at any rate greatly modify, the character of the nation. This book, then, will remain as a photograph of what once existed, and a photograph that cannot fade; moreover the picture bears probably some resemblance to the state of our own ancestors 900 years ago, whose circumstances were somewhat similar. We fancy that we can detect a few traits of some of the characters of our fine old ballads, where modern plastering has not entirely obliterated the original strength and rudeness of the uncivilised outline.

The first scene, called "the Burgomaster," is an account of a visit to a gentleman, Arcadi Paolitch Pinotchin, who boasts much of the management of his burgomaster; the title given to a sort of mayor of the village, chosen from among the serfs by the master to manage the land and the slaves. He proposes an expedition to the village, that the sportsman may see how cleverly it is managed. He takes his cook in his carriage, and

Digitized by Google

clothes and cushions enough for six months. He interlards his discourse with French; and as they converse on the road he says: "My peasants are on the *abrok* (duty-money). What can one do? However, they pay me very regularly. I should have put them to the *corvée*, but there's not land enough to work upon. I only wonder how they make both ends meet; *mais c'est leur affaire.* I have a burgomaster—such a famous fellow! *une forte tête*, a real administrator. You may judge for yourself." They meet the starosta, the under-manager, next in dignity to the burgomaster; a gigantic fellow, who follows them respectfully. Every creature is in a state of terror as they pass along. The house of the dignitary is in a large field; his wife with low curtsies kisses the master's hand, and is presently seen through the door beating a servant in silence, who receives the thumps in the same profound silence. The burgomaster comes home, smelling much of brandy. On seeing the two visitors, he exclaims, in a loud drawling voice:

"'Ah, you who are our fathers, our benefactors—you have deigned to visit us.' Here he puts on an expression of tearful sensibility. 'What, you have deigned to visit us! Your little hand, my father—your beloved hand,' he added, stretching forth his lips with ardour. Arcadi Paolitch hastened to gratify this affectionate effusion. 'Well, father Safrone, how are things getting on?' said he, in a coaxing voice. 'Ah, father, how could they go wrong? Are you not our father, our benefactor? You have deigned to honour our poor village with your presence; you have loaded us with favours for all our lives. God be praised, Arcadi Paolitch, all goes well, thanks to your goodness.' Safrone was then silent for a moment, and stood still staring at his master. Then a new transport seized him, a little heightened probably by his previous potations; he kissed his hands again, and went on, in the same whining voice, 'Ah, merciful father that you are, I believe joy will make me crazy. Yes, I take God to witness, I can't believe my eyes. Ah, father!'

Arcadi just glanced at me, smiled, and said in French, '*N'est-ce pas que c'est touchant?*' 'But, father Arcadi Paolitch, why did you not deign to let me know . . . . your arrival? it is enough to put me beside myself; where can you sleep? every thing here is dirty and untidy.' 'It is nothing, it does not signify,' said Arcadi smiling, 'every thing is very well.' 'O yes, for us peasants; but for you—our benefactors!' Supper was then brought, and we sat down. Safrone sent away his son, telling him he was not fit to remain in such a presence.

'Well, have you done the surveying, my old man?' and Arcadi tried to imitate the speech of the peasant, looking the while at me with a self-satisfied air. 'It is done, father, thanks to your beneficence, the paper is signed. The people of Klinova were not satisfied; they wanted, Heaven knows what; they are a parcel of fools. My

Digitized by Google

father, they owe best thanks to you; we have *thanked* (this is the term for having made a present) 'Nikolai,' the surveyor. 'Ah, you are our fathers, our benefactors!' cried Safrone; 'we pray for you night and day. No doubt the village is short of land.' 'Very well, very well,' said Paolitch, cutting him short, 'I know you are a faithful servant.'"

Then follows an account of a corpse found on the estate, which Safrone, seeing that his master is displeased at the last observation, artfully relates. The corpse was immediately dragged on to the neighbouring estate, and a bribe given to the police-officer in order to avoid the fine, customary on such occasions. Paolitch is so pleased with this clever trick, that he repeats several times in French, "*Quel gaillard!*" They sleep at the burgomaster's, and Paolitch proposes showing the estate to the sportsman, who is rather curious to see something of this much-vaunted management; the burgomaster was less talkative than overnight, and showed much intelligence in his explanations of what they saw. They visited the hemp-fields, drying-grounds, poultry-yard, the orchards, the draw-well; every thing was in perfect order. The visitor was struck, however, with the sad and subdued look of the peasants. Arcadi Paolitch was quite delighted; he began descanting in French on the advantage of the *abrok* system, though he said he did not deny that the *corvée* was often more profitable to the land. They then rode to the woods, which were extremely thick; the old-fashioned system was followed of keeping the trees very close, and *à propos* of this Arcadi relates as an amusing anecdote, a story of a jocose proprietor who tore off half the beard of his woodman, to make him comprehend that felling trees does not make woods grow thicker.

"He then proposed going to a barn to show us a new instrument, which he certainly would not have done had he foreseen what we should meet there. A few steps from the door, near a quagmire, were two peasants, one an old man of sixty, the other a lad of about twenty; they wore coarse shirts of the village manufacture, a cord round their waists, and were barefooted. The Zemskoi (the man who keeps the accounts, and belongs to the establishment of the burgomaster) was apparently busy with them, and would probably soon have got rid of them had we remained inside a little longer. When he saw us he stood stock still, in the position of a soldier; the staroste did the same, with his fists closed. Arcadi Paolitch frowned, bit his lips, and approached the peasants, who threw themselves at his feet.

'What do you want?' said he in a stern voice.

They both looked at each other, but did not speak; their eyes winked as if the sun had shone into them, and they breathed quicker. 'Well, what is it?' in the same tone; and turning to the burgomaster, he

Digitized by Google

said, 'Who are those?' 'Of the Tobolieff family.' 'Come, what do you want? Have you no tongue?' looking at the old man. 'Come, you fool, don't be frightened.' The old man stretched out his long, sun-burnt, wrinkled neck; his pale lips moved convulsively, and he answered in a hoarse voice, 'Protect us, O lord!' He struck the ground with his forehead, and the youth did the same. Arcadi Paolitch looked down on them, threw back his head, put one foot forward, assuming a dignified look. 'What's this? who do you complain of?' 'Take pity on us, lord, allow us to breathe,—we are destroyed.' The old man seemed to want words to express his meaning. 'Who destroys you?' 'Safrone Jokonitch, O father.' There was a moment's silence; then Arcadi said, 'What is your name?' 'Antipe, my good father.' 'And who is the other?' 'My son.' A second silence; but Arcadi's mouth twitched. He twirled his moustache and said, 'How did he destroy you?' 'O father, he has ruined us past redemption: he has made two of my sons soldiers out of their turn.' From military conscription no family is exempt, but each must take its turn to furnish a recruit. 'And now he is going to take my third son. Yesterday, O father, he took from our yard our last two cows, and my poor wife was cruelly beaten. That is what his grace deigned to do;' and he pointed to the starosta, the gigantic son of Safrone and his under-manager.

'Hey!' said Arcadi Paolitch. 'Let him not complete our ruin; thou art our real father.' Paolitch's face became sterner than ever. 'What does all this mean?' said he in a lower voice, expressing subdued anger, turning to the burgomaster. 'He is a drunken sot,' respectfully answered Safrone, 'an idle fellow; he has been behindhand in his *abrok* these five years.' 'Safrone Jokonitch paid what was wanting to complete my duty-money five years ago,' said the old man, 'and ever since he has made me work for him; and besides that—' 'And why did not you pay your duty-money?' said Paolitch harshly. The old man's head fell on his breast. 'You are fond of drinking, you go to the alehouse—' Here the old man was going to speak; but Paolitch went on with increased violence, 'All your business is to drink and lie on the stove; the industrious peasants must pay for you, and you let them.' 'And moreover he is insolent,' chimed in the burgomaster, continuing his master's speech, who took it up again. 'Of course, it is always so,; they are drunk all the year round, and then come crawling at one's feet.' 'O my good father, Arcadi Paolitch,' cried the old man in a tone of despair, 'have pity on us,—take our part! We insolent! we are at our last gasp; it is as true as if I were speaking to Almighty God. Safrone Jokonitch hates me, and why? May God be our judge, he has worn us out. That is my last son; and he too, he is going.' . . . . . Tears started in the yellow and half-closed eyes of the old man. 'Take pity on us, all-powerful master—protect us.' 'And it is not only us that he treads upon,' said the lad; but Arcadi Paolitch stopped him, and speaking louder said, 'Who speaks to you? Silence, I say! silence! Ah, my God, why it is an absolute rebellion!. . . . No, no, brother, I'm not the person to be—' . . . He stepped forward and stamped; but, no doubt recollecting my presence, he retreated a step and put his hands

Digitized by Google

in his pockets. '*Je vous demande pardon, mon cher,*' he said with a forced smile, turning to me, and added in a low tone, '*C'est le revers de la medaille.* Come. Very well,' without looking at the peasants, 'I shall see about it; I shall give orders. Go away.' But the peasants did not rise. 'I have spoken! Hey day,—go, go, do you hear? I will give orders. . . . This is how it is,' muttered he, turning his back upon them, 'always something disagreeable;' and he stalked off to the house, Safrone following him. The two supplicants remained a few minutes on the same spot; then, looking at each other, they slowly walked towards the village.

Two hours after this occurrence I was at Rebowa, where I went in search of game, taking a peasant whom I knew, called Anpadiste, with me. I talked about the peasants of Chipiloska, and of their master Paolitch, and inquired if he knew the burgomaster. 'What, Safrone Jokonitch? Indeed I do.' 'What sort of man is he?' 'He is not a man, he is a wild-beast, and such a one as you will hardly find between this and Konvsk. Now that estate of Konvsk only nominally belongs to—what do you call him? Paolitchkine.' (This termination to the name shows dislike.) 'It is Safrone's; he is the master.' 'Is it possible?' 'He treats it as his own property, for all the serfs are his debtors; he makes them work themselves to the bone: he sends some of them as carriers; some one way, some another; he has entirely exhausted them. They have not much land, they say. All false. Safrone hires more than eighty dessätins from the peasants of Klinova, and a hundred and twenty from ours, and more which I don't count; but he not only makes the most of the soil,—he sells horses, cattle, pitch, oil, hemp, and many other things. And the brute is rich. But the worst of all is that he strikes; he's a ferocious beast, and not a man.' 'But why don't the peasants complain to their master?' 'Why, because he has all he cares for,—nothing is owing to him. Ha, yes,' after reflecting a moment, 'I advise them to complain; he'd . . . . yes, they'd better try,—ha, you'd see what he'd do.' I thought of Antipe, and told him what I had seen. 'Well,' continued Anpadiste, 'he will destroy them without mercy,—the starosta will beat them till they die. Ah, what an imprudent fellow he was!—can any thing be so foolish? The poor wretch!' 'And why is he so persecuted?' 'I'll tell you. He once disputed a point with the burgomaster before an assembly of peasants; and he has owed him a grudge ever since, and has been always gnawing at him. Now he'll finish him; he knows who to fall upon. He daren't touch rich old men with large families; he is civil to them, the bald devil that he is. But on the others he falls without mercy. He has taken away two sons of Antipe from the village. He's a beast: may God forgive me!' And we went on our way."

We must make a few more extracts from Ivan Tourgueneff's narratives, to give our readers some slight glimpse into the life of the different classes in Russia. The tale called "Kor and Kalinitch" is a picture of two serfs so named, whose master, M. Polontskine, lives in the government of Kalonga, and is a friend of

Digitized by Google

the author's. It begins with a very circumstantial description of the villages in the governments of Orel and Kalonga. Kor's dwelling is in the heart of a wood, situated in an open space, which he has cleared of underwood, and has brought into a cultivated state. It consists of several buildings, connected by palings. The principal *isba* (the name of a Russian farmhouse or cottage) has a porch, supported by little wooden pillars. A lad of about twenty received the visitors. They entered the chief room; a small lamp burned in a corner before a massive image plated with silver; the table, made of lime-wood, was beautifully clean and smooth, as were also the wainscots, the interstices of which were free from their very common inhabitants, the nimble *prussaks* and slow-crawling beetles. The lad, who was Kor's youngest son, went away, and soon returned with a white basin full of *krass*, an enormous piece of wheaten bread, and a dozen salted cucumbers swimming in a wooden bowl, which he placed on the table. He then leaned his back against the wall, and stood looking at them eat this meal with a hospitable smile. Kor was absent, but six tall sons successively came in. Their horses, their *telega*, themselves, all were at the disposal of the master and his visitor. On the way home the latter inquires why Kor does not live in the village.

"'Because he is an intelligent man. Twenty-five years ago his *isba* in the village was burned down. He came to my father and said: "Nikolai Kouzwitch, allow me to establish myself far down in the wood, in the bog, and I will pay you a good *abrok*." "Why so?" inquired my father. "It is my fancy," answered he; "only, Nicolai Kouzwitch, require no other work from me, and I am willing to pay you any *abrok* you please." "Fifty roubles a year." "Very well." "But mind, no delays." "You may be certain that there will never be any." He then established himself in the bog, and he has been called "Kor" ever since.' 'And has he grown rich?' 'Why, yes; he now pays a hundred roubles of *abrok* a year, and could pay more if I required it. I have said more than once to him, "Buy your freedom;" but the sly fellow wants to persuade me that he can't afford it.'

The next day, as we were going through a village, we stopped before a small *isba*, and M. Polontskine called, 'Kalinitch,' in a loud voice. 'Here I am, little father; I'm tying my *lapti*' (a sort of mocassin made of birch-bark, and worn only by the poorest peasants). We went on, and were soon overtaken by a man of about forty, very tall and thin; this was Kalinitch. I liked his good-natured sun-burnt face directly I saw it. He always accompanied his master in his shooting excursions, and carried his gun and pouch, started the game, brought water, and gathered wild strawberries for him; he was always at his master's heels, always merry and humming a tune; he was very civil to me, but not servile; to his master his attentions were like those of a mother to her child. When the heat was intolerable, he would find out some

Digitized by Google

thicket in the wood where the sunbeams never penetrated; or if we had taken shelter in some hovel, he would fetch new hay for us to lie upon, and hang around aromatic plants; then he would muffle up his face and hands, and climb into some all but inaccessible tree and bring down new honey.

The next day we returned to Kor's house; and this time he was at home, standing at his door. He was a little old man, bald, broad-shouldered, and robust: his face reminded me of the busts of Socrates, and he spoke and moved deliberately. We talked of the harvest, of sowing, and of every thing that interests farmers. He always agreed to what I said; but presently I began to suspect that my questions were indiscreet, for he did not answer in a plain, straightforward manner. No doubt this was from prudential motives. For instance: 'Well, Kor,' said I, 'why don't you buy your freedom?' 'Why should I? I know my master well, and I know the *abrok* I have to pay; he is a good master.' 'Liberty is better,' said I. 'Yes,' he answered. 'Why don't you buy it, then?' Kor shook his head. 'Pray, father, what am I to buy it with?' 'Come, come, that's nonsense.' 'Well, suppose Kor has his freedom,' he continued, as if talking to himself; 'all those who wear no beard will be above him.' 'Well,' I answered, 'shave your beard; that's easy enough.' 'Kor will be a trader all at once; won't he?' 'Well,' said I, 'you trade now.' 'Yes,' he replied; 'I sell a little oil, a little tar . . . . . but . . . . . pray, my father, would you like the horse to be put to the *telega*?' 'Come,' thought I, 'you can keep a silent tongue in your head;' but I answered, 'No; I am going in search of game early to-morrow, and will sleep in your barn.'

Kor was much less reserved the next day. We all breakfasted round the Samovar; his six tall sons and their wives came in and out; they all lived with him; they preferred it, he said. Kalinitch came to see his friend Kor, and brought him some wild strawberries on their stalks like a nosegay. I was struck with this little attention in a peasant. I stayed with them four days, and they both became quite friendly with me; their characters were so totally different that I had a pleasure in studying them. Kor was a practical man; Kalinitch full of imagination: he venerated his master; the former understood and judged him. Kor's information was extensive for his position, yet he could not read. Kalinitch could. 'He got it somewhere,' said Kor; 'but the fellow is lucky.' In conversing with him, I for the first time learned how to value the sensible and simple language of the Russian peasant: but, with all his sense, he was strongly imbued with the popular prejudices and superstitions of his country; he had a sovereign contempt for women, and did not spare them when he was in a merry mood. His wife was old and cross; she was always lying on the stove, and did nothing but grumble and scold and abuse every one. Her sons paid her not the least attention; but she kept her daughters-in-law in a state of fear and trembling; and I recognised in her the spirit of the old Russian song:

> 'What sort of a son are you to me?
> What sort of a family chief will you be?
> You don't beat your wife, you don't whip your child.'

Digitized by Google

I once tried to induce Kor to interfere in behalf of the poor creatures; but he quietly said: 'What can possess you to think of such trifles? Let the women quarrel, they are not worth meddling with.'

Sometimes the malignant old woman would descend from the stove, call the dog from the yard, and when the poor thing came, she would assail his thin ribs with an iron poker; then she would go to the door and abuse the passers-by: this Kor called *barking*. It was curious to hear Kor and Kalinitch discuss M. Polonstkine: 'You shall not speak disparagingly of him,' Kalinitch would say. 'Why doesn't he buy boots for you?' returned Kor. 'Pooh—boots! I don't want boots; I'm a peasant.' 'I too am a peasant;' and Kor would thrust out his great thick boot. 'You! yes; but you are not one of us.' 'Well,' rejoined Kor, 'he might at least give you enough to buy *lapti*.' 'He pays for them.' 'Yes; last year he deigned to give you six kopeks!' Kalinitch turned away with vexation, and Kor would shake with laughter."

We see from this sketch what a serf may do under the favourable circumstance of a good master; it gives, too, a specimen of the devoted serf,—not the only one in the series. In another tale, a serf who has been beaten will not let his master be blamed, but vows he has deserved it.

The women seem to be turned into actual witches and furies by ill-treatment; and harshness to quadrupeds, its natural consequence, seems to be a universal feature.

The twenty-first chapter contains the account of an *odnodvoretz*, which is the name given to men of old families who have fallen into poverty; probably a rather numerous class in a country where property is equally divided amongst the sons.

Louka Petrovitch Ovrianikof is about seventy: he is tall and looks intelligent, his deportment is dignified, his speech and walk are slow, he wears a large blue greatcoat buttoned up to the throat, Wellington boots with a tassel; he is always very neat in his dress, which you may observe is nearly the same as that of a merchant; his hands are white, soft, and well shaped; he has a dignified and peaceful air, but a certain amount of indolence and obstinacy mingles with his integrity and good sense. Ovrianikof may be thought to represent the ancient boyards of the time immediately preceding Peter the Great.

All his neighbours esteem the old man highly, and feel honoured by his acquaintance; in his own class he is almost worshipped. It is rather difficult in general to distinguish an *odnodvoretz* from a peasant, for his household is often less comfortable than that of a serf; his calves are ill fed, his horses can only just crawl, and are harnessed with ropes. Louka Petrovitch's establishment, however, was an exception: his house was neat and comfortable, his few servants were dressed in the

Digitized by Google

old Russian costume. He always called them his workmen, and they ploughed his land. He neither set up for a noble, nor gave himself any airs; he never forgot himself, and never took a higher place at the first offer, and he always rose when any one entered; but he had such a dignified air, and his politeness was so genuine, that he was involuntarily treated with respect.

He kept to old usages from habit: he disliked springs to a carriage, and drove in an old-fashioned *telega*. His driver, a youth in the old costume, sat respectfully by his side. He read none but books of piety; he received his visitors affably and courteously, but never prostrated himself as the lower classes are accustomed to do, nor loaded them with civilities and sweetmeats. He thought it sinful to sell corn. "It is the gift of Heaven," he would say. But in the scarcity of 1840 he distributed his corn amongst his neighbours, of whom he was the oracle and umpire.

"One day, as we were conversing, I said to him, 'Now, Louka Petrovitch, tell me frankly, were the old times better than ours?' 'In some respects they certainly were,' he answered; 'for instance, we all lived more quietly, and people were better off. This is true; and yet our times are best, and, by the grace of God, our children will be better off still.' 'Well, now, Louka Petrovitch, I expected to hear you hold forth in praise of former times.' 'No, I have no reason to praise them. I will give you an example. You are a seigneur, as was your late grandfather; and yet your power is much less, and you yourself are quite a different sort of man. No doubt we still have nobles who oppress us; I suppose it can't be helped; but by dint of grinding we shall get good flour at last. No, I shall never see again the things I saw in my youth.' 'What did you see?' 'Why, let us take as an instance your grandfather, whom I have just mentioned. He was a powerful man, and he did not spare us poor folk. Well, you know, or you might know, on your estate, the corner of land between Tchasslignino and Malinina, that now bears oats. Well, that is ours, —all that is our own. Your grandfather took it from us. One day, when he was riding, he stretched his hand out on that side and said, "That belongs to me;" and it became his own. My late father (God rest his soul) was a good man, but passionate; he took this to heart, —one does not like to be robbed without resisting; he went to law and appealed to justice: but every one was frightened, not one would help him or appear as a witness. Your grandfather soon heard that Peter Ovrianikof accused him of deigning to take his land; he immediately sent his huntsman, Bahouche, with his men to us. My father was seized, and carried off to your estate. I was then a little boy: I followed him barefooted. Do you know what happened? He was dragged under the windows of your house, and flogged under those very windows. Your grandfather stood in the balcony, looking at the execution of his orders; your grandmother was sitting at the window,

Digitized by Google

looking on too. My father cried out, "Marie Varilaona, mother, deign to intercede for me,—pray, take pity on me;" but she merely rose and went on looking. My father was forced to promise that he would never again lay claim to the property, and to give thanks that his life was spared. Ask your peasants what name that piece of land bears; it is called "the Cudgel," because by the cudgel it was acquired. You may perhaps understand now why small people like us cannot regret the old times.'

I knew not what to answer, and felt ashamed to look him in the face. He then related some feats of another neighbouring proprietor, who was a confirmed drunkard. 'In some of his drunken freaks he liked to see people dance; and he did *such* things! enough to make one carry the holy images out of the room. He half-killed the women servants of the house by making them dance and sing in chorus all night: those who sang loudest had a present; but when, from excess of fatigue, any one of them sang slower or in a weak voice, he would lean his head on his hand and moan, saying, "Poor orphan that I am, they neglect me; poor little pigeon that I am, they forsake me." Then the coachmen would be called in, to revive the flagging strength of the singers with their whips. This man had taken a fancy to my father; and would have been the death of him, if he had not luckily died himself by falling from the top of a turret. These are some of the things that our neighbours did.' 'Times are altered,' said I. 'Yes, yes,' answered he; 'yet one cannot but own that our nobles then kept up quite a different sort of state to what they do now. As to the great lords, there is no comparison. I used to see them at Moscow; but I am told that even at Moscow they no longer keep up the same grand state.' He then described the establishment of a well-known great personage at Moscow in the days of his youth.

'Yes,' he continued with a sigh, 'I have lived a long time, and the changes have been great, especially amongst the nobles. The small proprietors have gone into the army, or have travelled about. The larger ones are also much changed. I had an opportunity lately of seeing some of them, when they came to make the survey. I must confess to you that my heart rejoiced to see how much more affable and polite they have become: but one thing surprises me; they seem to know every thing; they speak with such fluency that it moves one to admiration; but when it comes to business, they do nothing but make blunders, and they don't even know what their own interests are. Generally their steward, a common serf, manages every thing his own way.'"

The success of *The Russian Sportsman* was so complete in Paris, that two volumes by the same author were published in the latter part of 1858, under the title of *Scenes of Russian Life*. There is more story in these volumes than in the first work; yet they are not formed on the regular plan of our tales. They are, in fact, as their title indicates, scenes of Russian life, only this time drawn from the higher and more cultivated classes;

Digitized by Google

and with the exception of two remarkably clever tales, in which he returns to the serfs and his old manner, they are less exclusively Russian: the characters talk and write about themselves, their thoughts and feelings, and are inclined to be introspective. In this, as in every thing besides, they are a complete contrast to the serfs.

These volumes contain minutely-drawn pictures, taken from all grades of society; but more particularly from the class of persons who reside on their own estates in the country, and who correspond to our own country gentry. One scene in a dramatic form, called "the Bread of Dependence," presents us with a trait of Russian manners which probably existed in our own country some hundred years or so since, and of which the court-fool was a variety and last remnant,—we mean the impoverished gentleman who lives as parasite in a rich family. This character is introduced in several of the stories: he is not only a flatterer, but the buffoon and butt of the rich man and his friends. Ivan Tourgueneff, with his usual enlarged sympathies, has given something so touching to this pitiable character, that it may remain as a permanent type. The rest of Europe has no right to be severe on this barbarous taste of the Russians for a human plaything, when they remember Friedrich Wilhelm's delight in the same thing, and the way in which he used his courtiers. If this may be accounted for by the contiguity of Russia to Prussia, and the brutal character of Friedrich Wilhelm, we have only to call to mind the amusements of the elegant duke and duchess in *Don Quixote* at the expense of poor Sancho. This, too, was in the palmy days of Spain's civilisation. The ironical suggestion of Cervantes, that Sancho was but a peasant, and therefore much honoured in being allowed to amuse such great people in its literal sense, presents probably a true picture of the existing feeling of the times. A fragment, entitled "a Correspondence," contains some reflections which, as proceeding from a Russian in his own country, deserve attention; we therefore translate a page or two of it:

"For the first time I took a survey of my past life. Yes, there lay my youth spread out before me. It was not a cheerful spectacle. Great God, that I should have so wasted my life! I have now regained my senses, but it is too late. Have you ever saved a fly from a spider? if so, you have put it in the sun; its legs and wings are sticky. How awkwardly it crawls, and endeavours to get free from the glue that has been wound around it! It has escaped with life, indeed, but will never more rise lightly in the air, buzzing merrily in the sunbeams. And it was not the silly thing's own doing: but I—I was my own spider. Yet I must not be too severe on myself. Is the individual to bear the blame when a whole nation is in fault? We are not all equally guilty,

Digitized by Google

but we are all equally stricken. It is often said that every man makes his own destiny;—that may be; but the character of each individual goes to make up the national character, which falls like a heavy cloud upon him and becomes his fate. But the Russian who would be a man *must* make himself—'there lies the rub;' he has no great motive *out* of himself,—no noble public interest to absorb his attention and his selfishness; he must spend his energies in working on his individual self, and thus he sits kneading and patting his own mind. He has no exciting examples in the national traditions, no respect for the laws, no faith in the past, and no hope in the future. Each must *invent* his ideal for himself; and in this self-contemplation he dwindles into nothing. One more useless being is added to our nation, whose genuineness is warped by want of freedom, who can never know the healthful joys of open exertion, nor the pains and triumphs of fighting for a conviction; ignorant without innocence, old without prudence, and, worst of all, young without youth."

The impression left on the mind after reading Ivan Tourgueneff's works is of course a mixed one; but is, on the whole, very favourable to the national character,—we mean that of the larger mass of the peasants. They submit with patience to their masters, they are kindly to one another, they bear no malice towards the higher classes, and have preserved the virtues of adversity through their years of probation. Fortitude, patience, humility, and above all, veneration, are their characteristics, and to this last quality they owe their preservation from vileness; having accepted their position as the ordination of Providence, they consider their masters placed over them by God, and never seem to question their rights. This striking feature in their character is well brought out by Tourgueneff in his tale of "the Inn on the High-road." Here the serf is sacrificed by his mistress in favour of another man; but he only sees that she has a right to sell his inn, and his hatred is entirely bestowed on the purchaser. In these democratic days, some may term this a foolish superstition; but none the less in that superstition we may clearly discern some of the highest qualities of human nature, which no institutions, however bad, can entirely destroy. If we deny this, may we not fall into as frightful a fatalism as either the Mahometans or the Calvinists? Envy, conceit, and pride have always been common enough under a free government; and if less despicable than the vices that slavery tends to foster, are not the less despicable enough; and if we speak of the virtues that slavery has not obliterated, or of the vices that freedom has fostered, it is from no wish to undervalue freedom, but simply because it is important to recollect that no external system of government can absolutely determine, either for good or for ill, the moral freedom of man.

Digitized by Google

If we could suppose that human nature might either become entirely vitiated by the one government, or mechanically perfected under the other, where would be eternal justice? Cousin, the eloquent French thinker, who has helped so largely to drive materialism from France, once justly observed, "God has never entirely disinherited any portion of the human race." And is it not in favour of the freedom that is now hovering over wide Russia, that the poorest of her children are not entirely unworthy of it? In our own self-satisfaction, it may be good for us to examine if we do not sometimes make but a poor use of our blessings; and as a looking-glass in which to discern the spots on our faces, this picture of Russia, under circumstances so far less favourable to the growth of social virtues, may be useful even to Englishmen.

But to return to the peasant. This superstitious reverence for his master, is the effect of the admiring and trusting faculty; the object of it may be a mistaken one, but no human being is utterly debased who possesses faith—the belief in something higher than himself. Intelligent Russians, who have seen much of these classes, assure us that they now wait with a solemn and silent hope for the great deliverance,—that they all think of it, and well know what has been promised. We are assured by one who was living in the government of Orel, the very scene of most of Ivan Tourgueneff's experiences, when the late war began, that he had heard peasants say, "Perhaps the strangers may deliver us." The effect of slavery on the women, both as mistresses and slaves, seems to be worse than on the men; they appear to be in a lower position than with us, and what is worse, they deserve it, though the Russian authority above mentioned affirms that they are more high-minded than the men. Another trait worth observing in the *Russian Scenes* is the high value set on education. In the story called "the Miller's Wife," the miller buys her, and marries her, although her character is lost, because she can read and write. In "Kor and Kalinitch," the former speaks of the latter as a most lucky fellow because he can read. In "the Inn on the High-road," Akim, though a peasant-serf, is esteemed much above the others as he can read. In "the Two Friends," where the personages are both country-gentlemen, one of them tells his friend of his project of marrying; and the other opposes it, on the ground that the young lady is not his equal, having been brought up in a country village and having had no education like his own: yet her character and manners are excellent. The marriage turns out unhappily, on account of her possessing only household qualities, and their having no interests in common.

Digitized by Google

We have observed before that the Russian serfs resemble, in many particulars, our own countrymen of seven or eight hundred years ago; another point of likeness is their deep religious feeling, prompting long pilgrimages and solemn vows. An anecdote *à propos* of this was related to us by the Russian before mentioned, which strikes one as though a solemn and devout figure on a church-porch of the twelfth century should suddenly start into life, and step on to the platform of one of our noisy bustling railroads, emblems of the nineteenth century. A Russian lady came to France, and brought in her suite a young serf-girl. In the hurry and confusion of the railroad, she lost her mistress; her signs were unintelligible, she was utterly helpless, and could do nothing but weep. The station-master was very kind, and did all he could to comfort her; gave her food, and found her a lodging. After two or three days she was restored to her mistress; and in a transport of joy, she pronounced a solemn vow to God, "that whenever she should find a stranger in the same painful position in Russia, she would leave her family, her place, every thing, to devote herself to his service, out of gratitude for all the kindness that she had received."

We have dwelt chiefly on the serfs, as little was known of them in Europe till Ivan Tourgueneff introduced them to notice. His pictures of the higher classes are equally graphic and original; and they leave on the mind the same conviction with all other works* on Russia, from Catherine's Memoirs, in 1759, to these tales in 1858,—that the higher classes will be the greatest gainers by emancipation,—that the despotism over them has been as grinding as theirs over the serfs. We will not enlarge on this despotism,—it is a trite subject; but will only say, it is impossible to suppose that such a change can be a solitary one.

Some of Tourgueneff's best sketches are those of the serfs who have become favourites by flattering their masters and administering to their whims and vices. It is, of course, only the vile and artful who reach this position; and they present one of the most odious features in Russian society. They are a combination of the American slave-driver and the ancient Roman freed slave, and are far more cruel to their former equals than the masters, whom they rule entirely. It is to be hoped that they may gradually disappear.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the best and

* Haxthausen is an exception; but, though his book contains much information, it must be borne in mind that he was sent to travel over Russia by the Emperor Nicholas for the purpose of writing a book; that he knew not a word of the language, and therefore the Emperor appointed two Russians to accompany him, between whom he was much in the position of a horse in blinkers.

Digitized by Google

most respectable portions of the Russian gentry is their entire want of self-government. It is difficult to believe how careless and incapable of managing their own affairs they are. "*Ils ne savent pas arranger leur vie,*" is a French expression which might have been made for them. This peculiarity, which has been noticed by all who have met with them in Europe, and which is not without a certain grace, however detrimental to the interests of its possessor, is very strikingly displayed in Ivan Tourgueneff's scenes. Alexis, from whose letters we gave an extract, describing the feelings of a Russian noble, has a correspondence with a charming girl, for whom he appears to feel the tenderest sentiments, and in a union with whom he would have found happiness. He writes to tell her of the day that he will set off to see her; but on the journey he meets accidentally with a friend, who takes him to the theatre; there he instantaneously falls in love with an opera-dancer of the lowest class; he follows her all over Europe, never even answers his betrothed Marie's last letter, destroys his constitution, and ends by dying at an inn at Dresden. This extreme want of reason and common sense appears quite natural to themselves, and to those who are acquainted with many Russians. In the most important pursuits they are turned aside from their purpose by the merest trifle.

In a story called *The Anchar*, one of these men without helm or compass, and a girl from Little Russia, a beautiful character, fall in love with each other; and the same infirmity of purpose destroys both. This is one of the tales in which Ivan Tourgueneff's wonderful power of *chiselling*, if we may so express it, the female character, is best displayed. The title of the story is taken from that of a poem by Pushkin called "The Anchar," a kind of upas-tree that bears poisonous fruit: even the French translation of this poem gives a wonderful idea of the power of the poet. Alexis' letter, mentioned above, is both an account and explanation of this wasting infirmity of character, and a Russian's view of the cause of it, is likely to be a more correct one than that of any foreigner. We refer those of our readers who may be anxious for more information on this interesting subject, to the works of this writer. A new story by him has just appeared at St. Petersburg, called *A Nest of Noblemen*, the translation of which by M. Delaveau, will be eagerly looked for by all who have read the previous volumes.

Digitized by Google

Art. IX.—THE TRUE DIFFICULTIES OF THE ITALIAN QUESTION.

Farini's History of Rome from 1815 *to* 1850. 4 vols. London, 1851-1854.

L'Empereur Napoléon III et l'Italie. Paris, 1859.

Farini's Letter to Lord John Russell. Turin, 1859.

Mazzini's Letter to the Italian Liberals. London, 1859.

The language of Signor Farini's letter, and the tone of the recent debates in the Sardinian Chambers, indicate so curious an inability, or so unhappy an indisposition, on the part of Italian liberals to understand the feelings and conduct of Englishmen at this critical conjuncture, and it seems to us so important to clear away these misconceptions, that we cannot better employ the short space allotted to us than in an attempt to lay plainly and unreservedly before our readers the true position of the various powers and peoples concerned in the discussion on which the eyes of all Europe are now turned, and which appears to be fast verging to an open rupture and a sanguinary conflict.

It is hard to have to choose between two great evils, and to steer our course amid circumstances so peculiar and so involved that it is impossible to pronounce any course at all to be either clearly right or obviously wise. Still harder, perhaps, is it to have to say to patriots whose cause is good, and whose sufferings are great, "Forego a tempting opportunity for the sake of an important principle; and refuse the aid which would probably enable you to cast off the yoke of old oppressors and hereditary enemies, because the hands that offer that aid are not clean, because the offer itself is not disinterested, and because the price which will be demanded in case of success will be such as no patriot ought to pay, or could in his cooler moments contemplate without a shudder." But the false step made or menaced by the Italians, and by the Piedmontese in particular, in conjunction with and under the influence of Louis Napoleon, have forced this language upon us; and it is important they should be assured that the apparently cold and unfriendly attitude of England at the present conjuncture indicates no diminution of our sympathy with Italy, but is a somewhat reluctant concession to the claims of prudence, justice, and public right.

We see the difficulties of Italians clearly: let them in turn endeavour to see ours likewise. If they had done so, Count Cavour would scarcely have made his speech, and Signor Farini would not have written his letter. It is clear to us, and has

Digitized by Google

always been so, that situated as Austria is in the north of Italy, and allied with her as all the Italian sovereigns save one are, either by interest or by affection, Italian independence can never be achieved without foreign aid.* Austria is more than a match for the Italian patriots and the Sardinian army combined; and no war of emancipation in Naples, Romagna, Tuscany, and the Duchies, assisted by Sardinia, could be conceived which would not inevitably involve Austria as a principal,—nay more, which would not legitimately and of right involve her; since the Lombard and Venetian people would assuredly join the insurgents, and Lombardy and Venice belong to Austria,—and no one could say that Austria would not be justified in putting forth her whole strength to suppress rebellion, and defeat and crush the confederates and allies of rebels. On this account, we have always condemned the conduct of Mazzini in fomenting insurrections at moments when no European crisis or quarrel among the great powers opened an opportunity for striking a blow while Austria had her hands full elsewhere, or offered the Italians an ally capable of helping them to the consummation of their righteous hopes. It seems, therefore, at first sight, cruel and inconsistent to turn round upon them now when such an opportunity and such an ally are both come, and urge them to forego the promising occasion, and to decline the proffered aid. Yet a few moments' calm reflection might satisfy them that even this unpalatable advice is not only sound but friendly. For once Mazzini is right: the manifesto just issued to his partisans,—in part dictated by prejudice and passion as it may be,—is full of instinctive sagacity and common sense. No crusade of which Louis Napoleon is the instigator, and in which he would

* This is clearly demonstrated in the imperial pamphlet placed at the head of this article, where the work to be done, and the means necessary for doing it, are estimated with an experienced military eye. "We lay it down as an axiom not to be disputed by any competent man, that even were all Italy revolutionised from the Gulf of Tarento to the Alps, the Austrian army might no doubt encounter partial checks and defeats, but that in the long-run it would always be able without difficulty to recover its hold on the Peninsula. Revolutions produce enthusiastic men; but they cannot create in a day either trained soldiers, a solid military organisation, or the immense material of war necessary to strive with a first-class power like Austria. Italy could not, unaided, maintain her independence unless she were able to bring into the field 200,000 disciplined troops, of whom 20,000 must be cavalry, 500 pieces of field artillery, and 200 pieces of siege artillery, which would require 50,000 draught horses. And ten years of a strong and energetic government would be needed to collect a military force like this." *Napoléon III*, p. 42.

We cannot here avoid calling the attention of our readers to this remarkable production. It is one of the most statesmanlike manifestoes we have ever seen,—calm, closely reasoned, singularly comprehensive in its views, and, with scarcely an exception, accurate in its statements of facts. If the title and the source from which it emanated had not aroused suspicion, we incline to think that it would have been received throughout Europe as a most masterly and unanswerable document.

Digitized by Google

be the main actor, *can* be designed for, or is likely to result in, the establishment of Italian freedom. The French Emperor is not a man to give something for nothing: he sells, he does not bestow; and he has, as we are all aware, his own plans of dynastic aggrandisement and foreign domination. If the Sardinian minister and the Peninsular patriots fancy they can use French arms and Corsican craft for their own ends, and then overpower the one and outwit the other, so as to evade the expected and inevitable price of the assistance rendered, they must be vainer and shallower than we suppose. If they have bargained for that assistance, and intend to pay the price contracted for, their patriotism is less pure, and their passions are more shortsighted, than we had hoped. The temptation no doubt was great; but they ought to have had virtue enough, and above all, sense enough, to resist it. It is just possible, no doubt, that the yoke of France might be somewhat less galling and less heavy than that of Austria, because it would assuredly be more intelligent, and because also there is less intrinsic difference and less instinctive antipathy between Gauls and Italians than between Teutons and Italians; but for so small and so questionable an object as a change of foreign rulers, it is surely not worth while to bring the desolating scourge of war upon their beautiful cities and their fertile fields. The opportunity for which they might have waited, and which sooner or later would probably have occurred, was that of an attack by Austria upon Sardinian territory or Sardinian institutions; when the assailed party might have securely counted upon French aid, in conjunction with, and purified and kept in order by, that of England also. Austria, in the wrong, and opposed by France and England as well as by Sardinia and all Italian patriots in a mass, must have succumbed at once, and submitted to any terms the conquerors might have dictated; and as England would have desired nothing for herself, and could not have sanctioned the transfer of any portion of the spoil to France, there would have in all likelihood resulted such a permanent and righteous settlement of the Italian question as the war now menaced can never bring about, but will probably postpone for generations. In taking the attitude and holding the language we have done, therefore, we are not deserting the cause of Italian liberation, but only frowning on a false step meditated in its defence.

And now let us look for a moment at the position of Austria in this matter, which is as difficult and unhappy as the attitude she has assumed in defence of it is sensible and gallant. We are no partisans of Austria, as is well known; and her conduct both in Italy and Hungary, as well as her selfish and noxious behaviour during the Crimean war, has often called forth our

Digitized by Google

severest animadversions. Nevertheless, in the matter we are now considering, her case is one of difficulty and almost of hardship; and it is fit that we should endeavour to do justice to it: if we do not, we shall neither fully understand the crisis nor be qualified to deal with it. Her proceedings in Italy now and heretofore, oppressive, cruel, and fatal to the best interests of that unhappy land as they have uniformly been, are the logical and unavoidable consequences of her position there,—a position originally and inherently false. Her situation as ruler of Lombardy and Venice entails all the other sins laid to her charge; and yet her possession of those provinces is in point of legal right unassailable, and is guaranteed by the treaties of 1815, and by the recognised international law of Europe. *Herein lies the difficulty of the question and the danger of the crisis.* Lombardy fell to her partly by conquest, partly by inheritance and agreement, and has been hers for centuries; and Venice was guaranteed to her by the European Congress of Vienna. You cannot ask her or expect her to resign these rich possessions; yet unless she does this, she can do nothing permanently to pacify Italy, to satisfy Sardinia, or to silence France. Do not let us shirk this fact. Whatever patriots who love their native land, and lovers of abstract justice who think only of nationalities and individual claims, may urge, no statesman will be found to deny that the right of Austria to her Italian provinces is as valid and as good as the right of Sardinia to Genoa or Savoy. Since, then, Lombardy is hers, she is entitled to defend it against all assailants, and to govern it as she pleases. Her government—every where, and by its inherent genius—is despotic; a paternal despotism; and, like all paternal despotisms, mild and beneficent where loved and yielded to without recalcitration, as in Austria Proper and the Tyrol; crushing and relentless where hated and rebelled against, as in Italy and Hungary. No statesman will deny, therefore, her right to govern Lombardy autocratically. It is her will, her nature, her conscientious and unchangeable resolve to do so. Indeed, it is notorious that she could govern it in no other way; she can hold it no otherwise than by the sword. The people hate the Austrian government at Milan; not because it is a bad government, but because it is the government of foreigners. Were it the mildest and gentlest rule in the world,—and we all know that to govern gently or mildly hostile and irreconcilable subjects is a pure impossibility,—the Milanese and Venetians would be scarcely more content under its sway than they now are. They do not detest it because it is harsh; it is (and must be) harsh because they detest it. Let us never lose sight of this most material fact; and let us cease the idle mockery, so favourite a platitude among our statesmen,

Digitized by Google

of telling Austria "to govern well, and that then she will be in no danger." It is not true, and we know it is not true.

It being admitted, then, that Austria has a legitimate right,—as right is constituted and defined by European diplomacy and law,—to retain Lombardy, by force if necessary, and to govern it autocratically, since that is her creed and practice of government, she naturally infers that she has a right also to do whatever (*within the limits of international law and usage*) is indispensable to effect these objects. And it is not easy to affirm that treaties and agreements with contiguous states to aid her in these legitimate objects exceed those limits. It is as clear as the sun at noonday that Austria could not rule despotically in Lombardy,—it is clear that she could not continue to rule there at all,—if she were surrounded on all sides by states governed on popular principles and rejoicing in free institutions. It is natural, therefore, that she should desire the adjacent countries to be ruled by princes whose system of government is analogous to her own, and not in flagrant and disturbing contrast to it. Finding them well enough disposed to maintain such analogy,—finding them, indeed, in a relation to their subjects so similar to her own, that autocratic government is as indispensable to them as to herself,—it is natural that she should ask their aid and promise them her own in upholding such a system of administration in their respective dominions. Nor is it very easy to say, that in carrying this natural desire into action she is violating any clear principle of international law or usage. If, indeed, the Areopagus of European states had ever adopted the maxim or established the practice which this Review has always preached,—viz. that all interference between sovereigns and their subjects, whether in the cause of despotism or in the cause of freedom, should be denounced, prohibited, and put down,—the case would be very different. But England has never formally laid down or consistently enforced this principle; and it is abundantly obvious that neither France nor Austria has ever respected or embraced it; neither, therefore, is righteously entitled to appeal to it for the first time now. France interfered in Rome; and Austria interfered in Tuscany, Modena, and Naples. Moreover, the right of entering into treaties of amity and alliance offensive and defensive with neighbouring states has ever been held one of the indefeasible rights of every independent power, questionable by others only when no distinct and genuine personal interest of the contracting parties can be alleged as a reason, and when, therefore, hostile designs against others may fairly be inferred. Now these treaties between Austria and the minor Italian princes are obviously for the common interests of all, and indicate necessarily no sinister or aggressive intentions on the part

Digitized by Google

of any against foreign powers. On what recognised principle of European law, then, can Europe, or France, or Sardinia, demand their abrogation, or insist that the court of Vienna shall forego and renounce a privilege conceded as indisputable to every other state? And how can we expect her tamely to resign such native right when menaced at the point of the bayonet?

Again; it is plain that Austria could neither hold nor govern Lombardy without incessant rebellion, bloodily inaugurated and bloodily put down, if insurrections were to be constantly breaking out in Romagna, in Modena, or in Tuscany. A revolution in Rome would inevitably be followed in a few days by a successful or unsuccessful catastrophe at Milan. Would Austria, then, be so culpable in aiding the Pope to put down his insurrection before it led to hers? And, since useless bloodshed is always to be deprecated, is she so very culpable if she interposes beforehand to *prevent* what she might lawfully interpose to crush? If not, her occupation of the Legations is not without excuse, and is assuredly more warrantable than the French occupation of Rome. No one doubts that the *bonâ-fide* and permanent withdrawal of foreign troops would be the signal for an outbreak against the hated government of Rome,—certainly for the coercion or dismissal of the Pope, probably for much retributive bloodshed, well merited but still deplorable. Are we prepared to say that there shall *then* be no intervention? Must Austria wait till the flames reach her own dwelling?

"Tua res agitur paries cum proximus ardet."

If, in the case supposed (*and certain*), there is to be intervention again, then surely it would be better to have no withdrawal. It is, moreover, notorious that the papal government is so wretchedly incapable that it can neither keep the peace, secure property, put down brigandage, nor control its own agents; and it is not very probable that the provisional government which would succeed it, in case of the retirement of the foreign troops, would, in the first instance at least, be much more competent. It would be almost certain that these disturbances would constitute so great a nuisance that neighbours would have an equitable right to interpose and crush such perilous and contagious disorders. But whatever line we take, either in argument or in action, do not let us lose sight of the point (which it is the especial object of this paper to urge), that to call upon Austria to abstain from all active interest in the affairs of extra-Lombard Italy is virtually to call upon her to abandon her Italian dominions altogether, or to hold them only by the tenure of a perpetual state of siege and bloody internecine strife. Those who talk of "settling the Italian question" by inducing

Digitized by Google

France and Austria to withdraw from the Roman States, *and to remain withdrawn*, are speaking ignorantly, thoughtlessly, or insincerely. Either the withdrawal would be a sham,—in which case it would have effected nothing; or it would be genuine and final,—in which case it would be followed by certain revolution, by the flight or dethronement of the Pope, and by the various political complications which such a catastrophe would entail.

We have dwelt upon the difficulties of Austria at this great length, because we think they have had the scantiest justice done them; but Rome, France, and Sardinia have their difficulties too, and difficulties of no trifling character. It is common cant to say, "The Pope may avert the menaced convulsion by granting free institutions to his people, and honestly engaging to govern well and in conformity with popular demands." The Pope can do nothing of the kind. Those who hold such language forget what the Pope is. He is the infallible head of the Catholic Church; he is *ex vi termini* an autocrat; his government is *ex hypothesi* a theocracy. Without abjuring his character and his functions, he could no more be the constitutional monarch of a parliamentary government than Mahomet or Moses; for a constitutional monarch must govern according to the will of his people, and not in obedience to the dictates of his own conscience or the decisions of his own judgment. Yet less than this would not meet the necessities of the case. Less than this would be an insult and a mockery. Less than this would afford the miserable Romans no relief and no security from the fearful, stupid, brutal misgovernment inseparable from ecclesiastical administration. The admission of laymen into high place would be nothing; for it might be made, and would be made, mere moonshine, since laymen may be found in scores as bad, as incapable, as ecclesiastical, as any priest. We have had proof enough how powerless are constitutional forms, what a delusion are even good laws, where there is no genuine *bonâ-fide* popular power to enforce the one and infuse life and truth into the other. Now this real popular power is precisely what the Pope *could* not concede without ceasing to be Pope, and becoming a mere spiritual pontiff without temporal authority or temporal dominion.* And we have reason to know, more-

* We cannot enter at any length into the proof of this position, nor is it necessary. We will only indicate two or three points, to bring the impossibility into full daylight. (1) The whole course of ecclesiastical sovereignty is based upon the *canon* law; the necessities of civil government, if justice is to be administered or liberty preserved, demand *common* law—the Code Napoléon, or some equivalent system. (2) The Inquisition must be abolished if the civil rights or the personal safety of Romans are to be secured. *Could* the Pope consent to the

Digitized by Google

over, that his mind is irrevocably made up on this subject, and that no considerations will induce him to give way. To call upon the Pope, then, to prevent revolution by granting free institutions, is as futile and as irrational as to call upon Austria to make herself loved in Lombardy by governing well.

The position of France, too, in this complicated matter is full of difficulties; and her case, were she candid in her statements and honest in her aims, would not be without its hardship likewise. Suppose for a moment the Emperor's intentions were as honourable and benevolent as his professions;—and we must, for the sake of argument and of clear vision, accept this supposition as a possibility, because the Emperor may find it prudent and necessary to contract his designs and proceedings within the limit of his professions, and then we should have a somewhat modified problem to deal with. Suppose, then, that the Emperor seriously desired, without any ulterior or sinister designs, to escape from a position which began in crime, which continued in degradation, which was always false, and which has now become intolerable. The nineteenth century has scarcely witnessed a blacker political iniquity than was committed by the French Republic when she crushed the Roman one,—when, having just discarded her own sovereign for comparatively slight offences, she forced back the pontiff upon his unwilling subjects, without any plea of special concern in the matter, and without any security against the tyranny and misgovernment so inevitable in the case of princes restored by foreign arms. This act, we must do Louis Napoleon the justice to remember, was Cavaignac's, and not his. Being there, however, he could neither withdraw with honour nor remain with credit or with usefulness. If he had withdrawn his troops without conditions, Austrian troops would instantly have filled their places, and that Austrian influence in Italy, which it was the especial purpose of the French expedition to countervail, would have been immeasurably strengthened and extended. If he had exacted as a condition of withdrawal that Austria should

extinction of this ancient ecclesiastical jurisdiction? and if not, he must have instruments to work it—judges, officers, and gaolers. Then what Roman would be safe for an hour against arbitrary punishment, nominally for ecclesiastical, really for political, offences? (3) What could a *constitutional* Pope do when placed in the dilemma which nearly killed Pio Nono in 1848, of being compelled as sovereign of the Roman state to declare war against his best friend and ally as supreme spiritual pontiff—Francis Joseph of Austria, the hero of the Concordat? Or when called upon as *prince* to aid and befriend the King of Sardinia, whom as *priest* he has excommunicated? (4) One of the earliest and most inevitable steps taken by a popular government to restore the finances must involve the taxation or sequestration of much church-property. Could the Pope sanction bills of this character?

Digitized by Google

abstain from intervention, the work of the expedition would have been undone, and the Pope would have been again dethroned and driven into exile. The Emperor was thus in a dilemma which left him utterly powerless to enforce upon the papal administration that decent and rational government which we believe he really wished to see established. The Pope saw his perplexity, and laughed at his remonstrances. For ten years he has borne the painful and disreputable position of being the supporter and enforcer of misgovernment and oppression;—he wishes to escape from it now, but without ludicrous failure or damaging humiliation. How is he to effect this object? We confess we do not see any way out of the difficulty without giving Austria a signal triumph; for, as we have already shown, it is idle to fancy either that the Pope has asked, or will ask, for the *bonâ-fide* withdrawal of both his protectors, or that Austria would honestly comply with such a request even if it were honestly made. Austria, we repeat, *cannot*, without suicidal weakness, concede the ostensible demands any more than the real pretensions of France; and she does not show the slightest intention of yielding a single point.

Finally, Sardinia, too, is in a difficult position; the difficulties of which, as in the case of France, are mainly, but not wholly, of her own causing. Her antecedents and her actual situation, her known wants and her avowed principles, have made her the leader and the hope of Italian liberation. Her statesmen have found it as difficult to contend against the patriotic impatience of the extreme radicals as against the papal and reactionary party in her own dominions. She must show sympathy with, and can scarcely refuse aid to, the hopes and movements of the patriots of the Peninsula, on pain of being denounced by them as a selfish alien or a secret enemy. She has long seen that Austria was strengthening herself on all sides of her, and watching with keen malignity for a plausible opportunity to strike. Under such circumstances, we cannot wonder that she should have been slow to discountenance or to break with the extreme Italian liberals, and somewhat foolishly and weakly eager to secure French assistance. We have no doubt that she has made a false step; but we cannot say that she was not under strong inducements to commit the error.

Moreover, according both to common sense and to diplomatic usage, she is as fully warranted in the demands she has made upon Austria, and appealed to Europe to enforce, as Austria is warranted, in the interest of her own system of government and of the security of her dominions, in declining to comply with those demands. Considering her Italian possessions only, and leaving out of view her German and Trans-

Digitized by Google

alpine provinces, which, in the eye of Italy, are *foreign*, and therefore irrelevant to the matter in dispute,—regarded as an *Italian* power only, Austria is neither so extensive, so important, nor so strong as Sardinia. Sardinia is therefore at least as much entitled to concern herself with the minor states of Italy, and to extend her influence over them, as Austria. The manner in which Austria has spread her diplomatic network over them all, occupied their territories, garrisoned their fortresses, overawed their councils, dictated their policy, acted in their name, is a legitimate ground of firm and spirited remonstrance, if not of active antagonism and hostility. Nay more, Sardinia may fairly allege that her free institutions are just as much endangered and impaired in their smooth working by the multiplication or maintenance of despotisms all around *her* as the arbitrary system of Lombardy would be by the establishment of popular governments around *it;* and that, in common justice and as a measure of obvious self-defence,—whether the right has been distinctly recognised at any European congress or not,—she is as well entitled to form alliances with Italian patriots for the prevention of the one danger as her rival is to form alliances with Italian princes in order to avert the other, or to demand from Austria that she, as well as Piedmont, shall abstain from such engagements.

Let us now sum up in one comprehensive view the whole of the "Italian question," with its proposed or possible solutions.

The continuance of the *status quo* is impossible, because it is unjust. It is incompatible with the peace of Europe, with commercial confidence, with diplomatic comfort; because intelligent and civilised races will never submit to injustice without reclamation and resistance incessantly renewed. The entire history of Italy since 1815 shows this: we had rebellions there in 1821, rebellions in 1831, universal revolution in 1848, and countless *émeutes* and insurrections in intervening years before and since. With the single exception of Sardinia, in every state in the Peninsula the people and their rulers are unceasingly and irreconcilably at variance. Every where the sovereigns are maintained on their thrones, and the people are debarred from their civil rights and liberties, only by the bayonets of mercenary guards or by foreign troops actually resident or ready at a moment's notice. No one can deny that this is the state of things; no one can maintain that such a situation is endurable, or can be stable. How, then, is it to be rectified? By what means, and to what extent, shall the needful modifications be introduced?

Digitized by Google

The primal and indisputable causes of this impossible and immoral *status quo* are the position of Austria as foreign and detested possessor of Northern Italy, and the peculiar position of the Pope as temporal and yet theocratic sovereign. Short of the removal of these two causes,—short of the de-secularisation of the Roman Pontiff and the retirement of Austria from Lombardy and Venice (issues not yet faced by European statesmen, however ardently desired by sincere Catholics and earnest patriots),—can there be any real or permanent solution of the difficulty? We think we have shown in the foregoing pages that there cannot.

Is there any *mezzo-termine?* Obviously none,—none that would not be a sham, a blind, a hollow and dishonest compromise. Some politicians, indeed,—and among them we must reckon the men who sent Lord Cowley to Vienna,—with fortitude enough to endure any old evil, but without courage to embrace any new remedy, ever more disposed to fail by half-measures than to succeed by whole ones—have suggested that Austria should retire within the treaties of 1815, and retrace the forward steps she has taken since. But such a proceeding, while it would weaken her present commanding position in the Peninsula, would not meet the emergency nor satisfy her foes. It might for the moment silence the diplomatic demands of France and Sardinia, but only by placing Austria in a less favourable position to resist other demands which would speedily be made. It might baffle her rivals; it would not pacify her subjects, or her subjects' backers and allies. The same advisers suggest a sort of joint protectorate of Rome by all the great Powers of Europe; who should with one hand coerce the Pope into justice and good administration, and with the other keep down his people from enforcing their own rights. Do those who counsel England to sanction or participate in such a step remember the precedent of 1831? In that year, as now, the French and Austrian troops occupied Romagna. A rebellion, caused by the wretched mal-administration of the government, had broken out, and had been suppressed by foreign force. The Five Powers interposed, and jointly presented a "memorandum" to his Holiness, setting forth the concessions and securities for decent government and civil liberties which they considered it absolutely necessary he should grant to his subjects. Nothing could be more moderate,—we might almost say, more futilely feeble. *Not one of them was carried out:* the Pope bamboozled four of his protecting counsellors and disgusted the fifth; and our minister, Sir Hamilton Seymour, on retiring, sick and defeated, from the Conferences in September 1832, thus addressed his colleagues, setting forth:

Digitized by Google

"That the efforts made during more than a year and a half by the Five Powers to reëstablish tranquillity in the Roman States have been useless; that, further, no one of the recommendations made in the memorandum of 1831, to remedy the principal faults, had been accepted; that the papal government, far from exerting itself to soothe the existing discontent, had aggravated it even since the negotiations; and that accordingly no body of Swiss would suffice to maintain tranquillity, which must sooner or later be disturbed."*

Are we going to play this miserable farce over again?

The opinion of English statesmen as to the existence of any possible middle course for Austria was put on record in 1848. On the 29th of October in that year Lord Palmerston addressed to our ambassador at the court of Vienna a despatch, in which he declares,

"that Austria has no chance of being able to retain Northern Italy in any useful or permanent manner, the inhabitants of that country being so profoundly imbued with an invincible hatred of the Austrian army; . . . . . that it would be wise on the part of the Austrian government, in the interest of its own real strength, to liberate the Lombard and Venetian people from its dominion, which they must always consider as a yoke; . . . . and that however well disposed her allies might be to aid her in case her righteous and legitimate existence in Germany were menaced, there prevailed on the subject of her pretensions to impose her yoke on Italy so universal a sentiment of injustice as would probably leave her almost without assistance in case of a war involving those pretensions."

It appears, then, to us clear and undeniable that neither England, France, Sardinia, nor the Italian patriots, can rationally be satisfied with any thing short of the two great conditions which we have specified above. We do not say that England has any title to propose such concessions to Austria or to the Pope; we think it a thousand pities that she has meddled in the matter at all; but we do say that, after what she has said and seen and done, she cannot with sincerity and dignity propose any less. For France and Sardinia to accept any thing short of these concessions, would be to admit discomfiture,—for any thing short that might be offered would be a notorious and insulting mockery; but we are far from saying that, diplomatically, either of these powers has a right to ask these concessions. The Italian people, too, throughout the Peninsula, moderates as well as radicals, know well, and have all along proclaimed, the absurdity and duplicity of any middle course. But is there the slightest probability that Austria will agree to these concessions without a struggle? Has she shown the faintest indi-

* History of Rome, by Farini, vol. i. p. 121.

Digitized by Google

cations of any disposition to yield? Do we expect, or can we ask, her to give way to this unprecedented extent till she has been decidedly worsted in actual strife?

It is not necessary to assume that any of the parties involved are really anxious for war—bent upon it *à tout prix*. Granting even the contrary, it is impossible that any of them can draw back without obvious and damaging discomfiture. In plain truth, France and Italy are warranted in demanding what Austria is warranted in refusing. They cannot decently recede from a demand which, yet, Austria cannot dream of conceding without a departure from all her traditional policy, and a descent from her haughty and resolute position. What first-class power ever yet surrendered or liberated an extensive and valuable portion of her dominions—especially on the summons of other powers—without a desperate and dogged conflict? Finally, what probability is there that hot-blooded and sanguine Italians, with the hopes that have been sedulously roused and the provocations that are daily given, will long abstain from outbreak, even though emperors and ministers should implore them to be quiet? We fear the decision of the matter will be taken out of the hands of potentates: insurrections will occur; Sardinia *must* then give the aid which will be claimed, and which has been as good as promised; and France, on pain of recreancy and dishonour, must come to the rescue. Therefore, notwithstanding the hollow assurances and the feeble efforts of diplomatists, our expectations of a peaceful settlement of the crisis, so long preparing and so deliberately exasperated, are very faint, and are daily growing fainter. The matter may drag wearily on for some time longer; but postponement is not solution.

If, or when, the war breaks out, what should be the course of England? Obviously, and of necessity, *entire neutrality*. She is not a contiguous state; she has no individual interest in the dispute. Sardinia is not attacked, so cannot claim her aid. She has no quarrel with Austria, so cannot take part with her adversaries. She cannot aid Austria, both because Sardinia is more especially her ally, because her sympathies are all on the side of Italy and Italian freedom, and because, in the despatch we have already quoted, she has placed her honest sentiments on record. She must stand aside till the exhausted combatants are anxious for pacification, and ask her to suggest the terms for a final and complete solution of the question.

POSTSCRIPT. Since the above pages were in type, hopes of a pacific solution have been again excited in some minds by the tidings that Russia and England have proposed a European congress for the settlement of the Italian question, and that France

Digitized by Google

and Austria have accepted the proposal. Even if the news be confirmed in its full extent (which at the moment we write is still uncertain), we should be wholly unable to share the sanguine anticipations to which it has given rise. The consent to such a congress indicates nothing more to our minds than that both parties are willing to postpone the conflict, and anxious to seek occasion, by mutual apparent concessions, to place each other in the wrong, and to throw upon each other the reproach of disturbing the peace of Europe. Our reasons for this opinion may be briefly stated.

In the first place, there is not the slightest ground for supposing that such congress will be instructed or allowed to enter into the real, deep-seated, permanent causes of the Italian difficulty. The *Times*, in its first announcement, declared that Austria was willing to abrogate the special and secret treaties she may have with the minor Italian states, and to evacuate the Papal States conjointly with France:—nay, even to allow the French to return thither if disturbances should break out in consequence of the evacuation, and if the Pope should request their succour. This would of course go far, not, indeed, to satisfy Sardinia, but to *silence* France; for it concedes all French demands. But a day or two after the *Mémorial Diplomatique*, an Austrian journal published in Paris, greatly modifies this statement, and declares that the court of Vienna has only consented to the congress on the specific understanding that it shall not question either the treaties of 1815 or the right of Austria to make whatever additional treaties she may please with surrounding states. It is evident that both these bases for congressional discussion would leave the real causes of the mischief wholly untouched. According to the first, the occupation of Romagna by foreign troops would continue, or be immediately renewed; and no provision whatever is made for terminating it; for if it is to be prolonged till the Pope adopts popular government, or is strong enough to maintain unpopular government without extraneous aid, it becomes indefinite, if not eternal. According to the second, the military occupation of Northern Italy by the Austrians, against the will of their subjects, is not even to be brought in question; yet while this continues, as we have shown, not only will Italy be in a ceaseless state of disturbance, but Austria will have to maintain there such overwhelming forces as will afford just ground for fear and umbrage to Sardinia. In short, a congress that is not prepared to discuss *ab initio* the two vital questions—of the Austrian possession of Lombardy, and the secular dominion of the Pope—can only meet for the idle and unworthy purpose of wasting a little more time, of prolonging the present wretched state of suspense, and of throwing a little more dust in the eyes of the public.

Digitized by Google

In the second place, a congress to discuss the complaints of Sardinia against Austria, in which Austria is to be represented and Sardinia is not, is at once futile and insulting. And a congress to settle the internal and international affairs of Central Italy, in which no Italian state is to have a voice, is not decent, and can never be satisfactory.

And, in the third place, the affair has grown out of diplomatic dimensions. As soon as it is made clear to the Italians that the great powers are endeavouring to evade war *and likely to succeed*, a revolution will break out,—probably in Tuscany; in which Sardinia inevitably and at once, and France secondarily, will be dragged in as principals.

Therefore we anticipate no good from the suggested congress, and we earnestly hope that England will be no party to it. And above all, we trust that such a timely expression of English opinion may take place as to prevent our ministers from committing themselves, *as we have reason to know they contemplate doing*, to the Austrian side of the dispute.

Art. X.—SCHLEIERMACHER'S LIFE AND TIMES.

Aus Schleiermacher's Leben. In Briefen. Berlin, 1858.—*Sketches of Schleiermacher's Life, from his Correspondence.* 8vo. 2 vols.

It is not unusual with our German cousins to dignify Biography with the dilatoriness of History. They think it decorous to let nothing be said of an eminent man, more authentic than a funeral panegyric or a *Fackelzug* ode, till his generation sleeps around him, and his hand-writing becomes an orthographical curiosity. Returning from his grave, they lock up his desk, and put by the key till his grandchildren are grown up: and then at length, when his books have become classics and his personality a shadow, memorials are opened which define the human figure and give it the movement and the flush of life. Our English sympathies are more impatient at first,—perhaps less susceptible to posthumous appeal. We like to spend our love and honour at near view;—to hang up our portraits while the colours are yet fresh, and the costume not out of date. Arnold's Life was in our hands within two years of his death; Blanco White's, within four; Channing's, within six. But for Niebuhr's correspondence his countrymen had to wait some twenty years; Stein's has only recently appeared: and here, after a quarter-century, the interior is thrown open to us of a life which,

Digitized by Google

more perhaps than any other since the Reformation, has given its tincture to the future of Christianity. The delay, however, we must confess, is no disadvantage to the foreign reader, to whom time has placed Schleiermacher in nearer rather than in remoter relations, and rendered the scene and period of his activity more familiar than before. Names, places, and events,—opinions, books, and questions,—which had no meaning for our fathers, have emerged into the light for us. By dint of much labour and the reiterated assurances of Mrs. Austin and Mr. Carlyle, every Englishman is enabled, when Germany is mentioned, to think of something else than King Frederick's cocked-hat, or Queen Charlotte's snuff, or Prince Hohenlohe's miracles: he has discovered for some time that the language can really be pronounced and even sung: he has caught glimpses of a spiritual life behind Hessian troopers and Bavarian beer; and enters not quite as a stranger the circle to which these volumes introduce him, from Moses Mendelsohn and Kant to Arndt and Twesten. The book is essentially autobiographical in its effect. There are scarcely any letters but Schleiermacher's own and those of a few almost domestic friends. But as he was in contact with all that was highest in the life of his time, we have sketches,—often slight indeed, but taken on the spot,—of the chief poets, critics, and philosophers of the most brilliant German age. Whoever cares for the literary feuds which transferred the sceptre from Nicolai to the Schlegels, till it rested in Goethe's royal hands;—or for the surprises of speculation whereby the universe, at the bidding of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, several times disappeared or changed its dress;—or for the patriotic struggles which worked through the night of Napoleonic despotism, cheered by the songs of Arndt and ready with the arms of Scharnhorst;—will here find words out of the very heart of all this life, and stand in the midst of its laughter and its grief. And it is through no dim or incompetent eye that he looks at it all: in assuming Schleiermacher's vision, he has the benefit of no ordinary medium;—of a discernment keen and wide,—a judgment considerate and calm,—a feeling lofty and tender.

The greatness of Schleiermacher as a theologian arises less from any specific force of genius than from the compass and balance of his mind. His intellectual appetite was omnivorous: and he early complains of his too impartial susceptibility towards all liberal pursuits. One only stipulation does his feeling require. They must not be merely technical and formal, but touched with some living interest human or divine. The natural sciences, as opening glimpses into the method of the universe;—philology, as putting the very fibres and circulation of human thought under

Digitized by Google

the microscope;—history, as manifesting the moral organism of the world;—philosophy, as the struggle of finite mind with problems of the infinite;—divinity, as the systematised record and interpretation of the religious consciousness in man;—all attracted him with equal and constant power, and drew from him specimens of masterly criticism, if not of original research. His Greek scholarship was not his strongest point: but one who is called by Immanuel Bekker "Platonis Restitutor," and whose work upon this field is defended by Boeckh against all impugners, cannot stand far below the highest rank of contemporary Grecians. He emphatically disclaimed all pretensions to philosophical speculation: yet no one can study his *Survey of Ethics* without admiration, both of its acuteness in detail and of the commanding vastness of its view over the whole. In biblical criticism, in church history, in interpretation of doctrine, he has since been surpassed:—but it is by his own pupils, under the impulse of his spirit and in the development of his method: nor is it too much to say that his *Program of Theological Studies*, and his still more remarkable *Glaubens-Lehre*, have permanently altered the whole configuration of scientific discipline for the Protestant divine. It is less, however, the completeness of his intellectual accomplishments than the interfusion through it all of a paramount religious feeling, that determined the form of his theology, by giving it an inner centre, whence it worked creatively outwards in all directions and compelled the whole matter of thought and knowledge to feel the pulsations of a common heart. The two extremes of the previous period,—its mechanical orthodoxy and its deistical rationalism,—marvellously disappear in him:—not that he destroys them by refutation:—not that he patches up an eclectic peace between them:—but their withered fruits seem to drop upon a fresh soil in him, and produce a living growth entirely new, where old truths carry a young sap and reputed negations break into bloom. Looking on the religious consciousness of mankind as the mirror in which Divine truth is reflected, and on the spiritual experience of Christendom in particular as its perfect and final revelation, he regards it as the function of theology to apprehend and interpret the essential Christian feeling, to clear it of its accidental admixtures, and exhibit it in its originality and catholicity. The sense of sin, the thirst for redemption, the recognition of Christ as uniting and reconciling the human and the Divine, constitute the characteristics, and supply the test, of a true disciple's faith: and every thing beyond this,—all conceptions and doctrines which have hung round this central consciousness as its pictorial or dogmatic dress,—must be regarded as open to criticism and change. By the use

Digitized by Google

of this criterion he obtained room for the free action of historical and biblical criticism, and remained tranquil at his point of refuge, whatever altered aspect might be given to external facts or church opinions. Not only were such ecclesiastical articles of belief as the doctrines of the Trinity, the vicarious satisfaction of Christ and his personal preëxistence, relegated to the list of "open questions;" but the New Testament writings themselves, as mixed products of the new grace and the old nature, are resolved into their permanent and their accidental elements; the former most richly found in the spiritual Christ of the Johannine gospel; the latter comprising whatever is Judaic and Messianic, with many of the special narratives, as of the birth, the ascension, and some of the intervening miracles of Christ. He thus withdrew the Christian faith to a shelter of inward reverence, out of the shifting currents of philosophical or historical opinion: and remained at peace in it, while others were drifting they knew not whither, or vainly protesting that there was no tide at all. In this course he was singularly faithful to a true and noble instinct. He profoundly felt that the Christian view of life and type of piety had their own intrinsic vindications, and were contingent on no undetermined authority. To render the consciousness of them clear was to reach their eternal root. They had become variously entangled with metaphysical, scientific, and antiquarian judgments, which had no plea of exemption from revision, and were fast betraying their transiency. He was far above the stupid impiety of intellectual fear on God's behalf. Let philosophy, let criticism, move freely on their way, and all that they find be welcome. That consciousness of God which it is not theirs to reach can look forth on any world they may spread around it, and give it the tincture of Christian consecration. Such was Schleiermacher's point of view,—surely devout and wise and generous. We are far from saying that Christian theology can be permanently sequestered, as it is in his scheme, from the problems either of speculative thought or of historical research. Having an all-comprehensive sympathy, it will inevitably reinvest itself with both. But there are times,—and such is the age yet unexpired,—when, in order to snatch it from fermenting storms and leave them to sweep on their purifying way, it is kindly recalled to the sheltered oratory of the inward life.

It is not our intention, however, to attempt any report or critique of Schleiermacher's system. Our concern is not with his treatises as exhibiting his doctrine, but with his private letters as revealing the man. The few words we have said respecting his characteristics are prefixed only as the portrait of his person is prefixed to the volumes before us; that the reader

Digitized by Google

may not be without some image of the form into which the growing features set, and may feel upon him the clear mild eye that looks so ready for the tear either of pity or of prayer.

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, born at Breslau in 1768,* was second child and eldest son of a poor army-chaplain in Silesia, belonging not to the Lutheran but to the Reformed (or Calvinistic) communion. Some pleasant womanly letters of his mother's to her brother, Pastor Stubenrauch of Halle, show the interior of a frugal pious home, and of a lively, somewhat unmanageable nursery; in which a weakly, anxious, fretful girl,—the good Charlotte to be so loved and cared for by and by,—and the tiny Fritz, getting all his accomplishments, speaking, reading, thinking, before the time,—and the lout Carl, penetrable only by the rod,—got through the hours together as they could. Of the father, absent on his itinerant duties for months at a time, we hear little for a while: the most conspicuous effect of his existence being a brief fluster through the house on his return of vigorous sewing and washing and gossiping up the long arrears of home and field experience. The burden of the education fell upon the mother; whose chief joy, it is evident, is in Fritz's quick mind and susceptible heart. In fact, he is rather *too* good and clever: for two whole years at Breslau school, he gets nothing but first-rate tickets, with the exception of one "pretty well:" and in so small a boy all this popularity begins to tell unfavourably upon his morals: he grows somewhat proud and uppish, and disappoints occasionally the mother's dream of a little Samuel. Fear not, gentle mother: the grace thou prayest for him shall flow upon him through thyself,—now through thy reverent ways and loving words, and then through thy silent image when thou canst speak with him no more. In addition to the check at home, his incipient conceit was soon pulled down by experience of a higher school. On removal of the family to Pless, on the borders of Galicia, he had two years' discipline under a pupil of Ernesti's, and found his faculties tasked and his emulation awakened by contact with real scholarship. But he was snatched from this advantage by another shifting of the domestic camp,—this time into a rural district, where no disciple of Ernesti had penetrated. For a year the boy of fourteen got what he could out of his father's spare time; and something, probably much more considerable, from the home store of books, which far exceeded, we regret to say, the resources of the army-chaplain's pay, and burdened him with debts for the rest of his life. It was necessary, however, to put an end to this pædagogic inter-

* We observe that the date of Schleiermacher's birth is erroneously given as 1787 in Bunsen's *Gott in der Geschichte*, part iii. p. 287. We take the liberty of pointing out the error for correction in a future edition.

Digitized by Google

regnum: the parents, anxious above all things to screen their children from the approaches of an unbelieving world, pay an exploratory visit to the Moravian brotherhood at Bertelsdorf at the time of their annual meeting: and being delighted with the spectacle of a purity and piety so rare, they leave all three children behind them to be entered in the schools at Niesky. In that pleasant Lusatian country, the young Fritz was to spend two of the most fruitful years of his life: insatiably drinking from the fountains of ancient literature and history; locked in closest friendship with his companion Albertini, afterwards Episcopus of the fraternity; imbibing health from the pure air of the hills and rambles over red-brown fallows or swelling harvest-fields; transported into marvellous deeps by the musical worship of the brotherhood in the great festivals of the Christian year; yet withal, conscious from the first of a certain incipient shadow which was to darken into sad eclipse ere his soul could be left in a heaven clear and bright.

Though the vow of the United Brethren binds them only to mutual love and a common life of apostolic simplicity,—though it professedly recognises as the basis of union nothing but the universal Christian faith,—the interpretation practically put upon this Catholic pretension may be conjectured from the entire satisfaction it afforded to the "Reformed" army-chaplain and his wife. In fact he found them no otherwise distinguished in belief from the communion familiar to him, than by the intense sincerity and thoroughness with which they realised and lived upon their doctrines. The utterness of human corruption and natural certainty of endless perdition,—the absolute cleansing of the curse away by the satisfying blood of God the Son,—the need of supernatural conversion in order to appropriate this redemption by faith,—the demand of vivid evidence in the *consciousness*, by a series of passionate experiences and novel affections, that this grace has passed upon the believer;—all these conceptions are presented in their hymns, their worship, their daily speech, with an unshrinking baldness which excludes compromise or escape. Minds too calm to catch the contagious flame, too clear to fancy it, too veracious to pretend it, must remain sorrowfully apart, long reproaching their insensibility ere they venture to suspect the delusion. Upon the young Schleiermacher, susceptible as he was of religious impression, the strain was too great. Already when a child of eleven years, he had pondered with anxious puzzle what he heard about endless punishments and the mode of rescue from them. At thirteen he laments to his mother that he has yet no consciousness of Christ's love and grace; which she attributes to his aiming so conscientiously at his own improvement! During the week's

Digitized by Google

preliminary visit to Bertelsdorf, he suffered great solicitude from the same cause; never questioning the depravity of his nature, but in no way assured of the supernatural grace of which he heard so much. His self-distrust, however, made him only the more eager to enter so holy a community, where surely, if any where, the dew would fall upon his heart. For a while the new life seems to have been so helpful to him as to suspend any morbid action that had begun. His letters to his sister, who had been received into community at Gnadenfrei simultaneously with himself at Niesky, are very religious without apparent constraint or sadness: and it is only towards the end of his school-days that his father has to answer his renewed self-accusations of unregenerate coldness towards the Saviour. The fiery trial had but smouldered: and was to burst out in all its fierceness at the next stage of his career. At the age of seventeen he and Albertini (Pylades and Orestes as they were called) were entered as students at the Seminary of Barby near Magdeburg—the University of the Herrnhüter: and, in spite of voracious reading, rather indeed in consequence of a mental activity beyond the resources of the institution,—the religious spectre returned in more definite shape. His uncle Stubenrauch's residence at Halle seems to call up visionary possibilities of a real University course, whose object shall be not faith but sight, and which may help him through his doubts and scruples. He complains to his father that he has no chance where he is of becoming a thorough theologian; that in the exegetical classroom the students hear nothing of the objections to the received system, and have no means of comparing the modes of thought which notoriously divide Christendom; and that this unworthy exclusiveness disturbs his trust. It is plain he was not exigent: a modest amount of sympathy would have answered his present need. But the army-chaplain knew nothing better than his usual dogmatic drill; and sharply bid him "beware of the tree of knowledge," keep clear of vain objectors, be assured that the Bible was an inexhaustible cyclopædia, and remember that faith was the Godhead's royal due. The cup could hold no more: and the bitterness of the youth's heart overflowed at last in a confession full of sweetness and reverence, but clear, dignified, and firm. In the course of it (in a letter of 21st Jan. 1787) he says:

"I confessed to you in my last letter my dissatisfaction with the limited scope of my position here; I pointed out the facilities it gave to religious doubts, which in our times are so apt to arise among young people: and I thought in this way to prepare you for the intelligence that such had become my case. But I failed to do so. You conceived that your reply had set me at rest: and I held my peace in

Digitized by Google

a way I cannot justify for six whole months, because I could not find it in my heart to undeceive you. Faith, you say, is the Godhead's royal due. Oh, best of fathers, if you believe that without this faith there can be no blessedness, not at least salvation in the other life, and no peace in this,—if such indeed is your belief, oh! implore God to give it me: for as it is, I have lost it. I cannot believe that he who called himself only the Son of Man was the true, eternal God. I cannot believe that his death was a vicarious atonement; because he never expressly said so himself; and because I cannot believe it to have been necessary: for it is impossible that God, who has evidently created men not for perfection but for the pursuit of it, should will their eternal punishment for not attaining it. Oh, best of fathers, the deep and penetrating suffering with which I write this letter will not allow me to recite in detail the history of my soul in regard to my opinions and all the strong grounds I have for them: but I entreat you urgently, regard them not as transient thoughts without deep root. For nearly a year has their hold on me been what it is: and it is not without long tension of reflection that I have adopted them. I pray you, keep not back from me your strongest counter-reasons: but, let me honestly confess, I do not expect that you will convince me at present, for I feel my position fixed" (vol. i. p. 45).

He proceeds to discuss his altered future; begging in any case for two years, under direction of his uncle at Halle; expressing a willingness to prepare himself for any profession, including that of a schoolmaster, that may be assigned to him; but avowing his strong preference for the continued study of theology, were it not perhaps too much to expect his father's aid in giving another heterodox teacher to his native land.

What might have been the reception of this communication had it fallen into the good mother's hands, can only be conjectured. Doubtless, she believed the creeds at least as devoutly as her husband, and had no glimmering of any new lights. But orthodoxy is human and precarious; love, divine and persistent: and when they try an issue together, there is no end to the gracious ingenuities which slip through every damnatory plea and win a gentle verdict. She had been, however, now these three years where, it may be hoped, heavenly things cast no troubled shadows, and the Holy Spirit blows up no storms. Left to his own wisdom in this emergency, the army-chaplain rushes at his heretical son with reproaches for sending an affliction into heaven and disturbing the mother's everlasting peace: —there can be no doubt of it, since even the stepmother (for the father has now another wife) has had a crying-fit about his heresies. "O you fool of a son!"—begins the paternal letter,— "who has bewitched you that you obey not the truth? Jesus Christ was set before your face, and now you crucify him." And in the same style of cruel insult, paragraph after paragraph

Digitized by Google

proceeds. The youth is upbraided with the religious solicitudes his tender conscience had so often felt, and told that they came from the same corruption of heart which has now leavened the whole lump of him with unbelief. Let him begone into the vain world whose honours he covets, and see whether he can live upon its husks. He talks about his "reasons" being "strong:" Pshaw! it is his pride and self-will that are strong indeed: his objections are what a child could overthrow. To this puerile task, accordingly, the army-chaplain condescendingly addresses himself with success not brilliant, we should think, in his own eyes, and altogether ineffectual upon his son. A sadder effusion of helpless orthodoxy and irritated affection (for affection, of the "Reformed" type, there still is), it would be difficult to find than this letter. There is acid in it for every open wound: and that Fritz could ever recover from the anguish it inflicted and persevere in his filial reverence, shows what balm there was in his genial nature. The advent of better days was materially aided by Uncle Stubenrauch; who now proves himself a wise and sympathising counsellor, manifestly moved towards the youth, yet influential with the father, and able, by his residence at Halle, to facilitate the next step, and offer in his house a poor scholar's chamber for the Moravian exile. To Halle accordingly the young heretic goes;—somewhat precipitately at last: for having confided to his religious guides at Barby the tattered condition of his belief, he finds that their brotherly love cannot hold out beyond Easter,—that he must spend the intervening weeks in spiritual quarantine, and then be finally removed beyond their borders as a poisoned "vessel."

And so, repelled by all who had cherished him, cast out with the mark of Cain upon him, he turns his face towards a city of strangers, and quits the scenes where chiefly his nature had struck root. Eighteen years afterwards (April 1805) he revisited the spot to which he had bid this desolate adieu. It was at the very date of his expulsion,—the Easter Festival of Immortality, which he had been deemed unworthy to share. The first sight of the familiar place and ways opened every spring of tenderness again, and the bitterness seemed all forgot: for his heart was a kindly and mellow soil; and the melancholy rain of the darkest experience sank gently in, only to become the sap of some green life. His account of this visit occurs in a letter of birth-day remembrance to a lady-friend, who had spent the day at the bed-side of one of her children drooping towards death:

"I was not aware, dear friend, that your birth-day fell on Easter Tuesday: but my thoughts were particularly full of you on my solitary

Digitized by Google

way. For, do you know, I have been spending my Easter with the Brotherhood at Barby: a fine and holy time of it I have had, days full of notable memories and delightful present experience. Barby was formerly the seat of the Seminary or University of the Brotherhood, whence I took my leave of them and came hither to Halle, now eighteen years ago. At present Barby is the seat of the Brotherhood's Institute, previously in Lusatia, for the higher education of boys, to which I was committed by my father two-and-twenty years ago, and where, under guidance of a genuine inward impulse, I entered into membership myself. So that Barby most vividly recalled to me at once the beginning and the end of my Herrnhütist career. The old Rector too of the Institute, from whom I first learned Greek and Hebrew, and who distinguished me, as long as I was under him, by quite a father's love, I found still living, an old man of seventy-seven years, bright and active, and most heartily glad to see me again. Then there were the glorious services on Good Friday,—a public reading of the history of the Saviour's Passion, with pauses of fine expressive Church music and a few verses from hymns, and no discourse, but only just at the end, and at the very death-hour of Christ, a powerful prayer proceeding altogether on the great idea of the atonement. On the Saturday is the Love-feast at the sepulchre of Christ: and at sunrise on Easter morning the festival of the Resurrection in the churchyard. In truth, dear Charlotte, nowhere through the whole Christendom of our time is there any public worship more worthily expressing genuine Christian piety, and more sure to kindle it, than this of the Herrnhüter. And whilst lost in deeps of heavenly faith and love, I could not help profoundly feeling how far inferior is our service, in which the wretched sermon is every thing; and this, under paltry restraints of form and subserviency to every turn of the times, and so rarely animated by the real living spirit. It will now soon devolve upon me to institute here [*i. e.* at Halle] a public worship, which is to serve as an incitement and model to many new generations of religious teachers distributing themselves far and wide. But how unhappily limited am I in my means! and how deeply do I deplore it, that I cannot bring home hither the best and finest elements of the Moravian worship! There was another delightful privilege I might have had, if I had ventured to ask it. They would not have refused me participation of the Lord's Supper with the brotherhood: but I was unwilling to request what is not strictly consistent with rule. It is the only place where there is a real celebration of the Lord's Supper. By Easter Monday I was already on my road back and half way home, and my old Rector escorted me a long way out of town. Next morning as I walked briskly in splendid weather, with my knapsack-porter always lagging and panting behind, memories of the days past shaped themselves into the fairest pictures within me, with the most affectionate yearnings after you all, my precious friends. It was as if, in my forsaken condition in the world, cut off from those who constitute the truest Christian communion in visible existence, a consolation came to me from the scattered invisible Church to which I belong, from the spirit we have in common, from our piety, our love. Do you not feel,

Digitized by Google

Charlotte, how specially I dedicated the day to you,—you, the purest, the holiest of us all?" (vol. ii. p. 21.)

From the midst of his ripest honours, indeed, he never ceased to turn a grateful eye upon these secluded years, "in which his thought and life achieved, at the cost of banishment, their freedom from the bondage of the letter." His sister remained in residence among the Herrnhüter for nearly thirty years after his departure: and during a visit to her in Lusatia, he writes:

"I am truly happy here with a dearly loved sister, in a glorious country, amid the wonder-moving impressions of an earlier stage of life. There is no place so favourable as this to lively reminiscence of my whole spiritual course, from the first higher awakening to the point at which I now stand. Here it was that my first consciousness arose of the relation of man to a higher world: on a small scale, it is true; just as spirits, they say, often make their apparition as children and dwarfs; spirits, however, they are, and for the essence of the thing it is all one. Here was the first unfolding in me of the mystic sentiment which so belongs to my nature, and which has upheld and saved me amid all the storms of scepticism. At that time it appeared in the germ: now it has attained its form; and I may say that I end with becoming a Herrnhüter again, only of a higher order. You can imagine the 'lively life' in my own thoughts that I am having here" (vol. i. p. 308).

Such was the life-long return which his heart made to the place that had excommunicated him:—in fair compliance, we should say, with the injunction,—"Bless them that persecute you." With very meagre outfit, with shirts too easily counted, and broadcloth consciously threadbare, he arrives at Halle, and takes his place among larger and bolder men at the desks of the theological auditoria. His father, who had so dreaded for him the worldly influences of the place, prudently makes the best of what is not to be helped; urges him to lose no time in mastering the English and French languages, that he may be recommendable "to some distinguished family;" and particularly counsels him to stick close to a certain young nobleman (of perfectly uncongenial habits) then at college, and in doing so to *beware of pride, and pay him the homage due to his rank.* Such advice Fritz parries with much modest self-respect, steadily excusing himself from applying artificial force to the natural affinities. Of that desirable young nobleman we hear one thing more;—that he refused to nominate Fritz to a schoolmastership in Breslau, on the ground that he was not half *big* enough! So ended the paternal hopes in that quarter.

In fact, the college period once over (of which scarce any memorials remain), the family problem,—what was to be done with Fritz,—became rather serious. The "English and French

Digitized by Google

languages" were ready: but the "distinguished family" did not appear above the horizon. There were pickings of work for poor and finished scholars at Halle: but these all went to the Lutherans, and Fritz meant to hold by the "Reformed." He was inwardly ripe for his examination at the threshold of the Church: but was outwardly short of the indispensable mileage to Berlin, and of clothes becoming so solemn an occasion and so dignified a presence as that of Examiner, Hofprediger, Consistorialrath Sack. This last measure, however, is successfully brought to pass in May 1790, after a year's residence as guest with Uncle Stubenrauch, now removed to Drossen (near Frankfort on the Oder): with the further result too of the real discovery, through Sack's patronage, of a "distinguished family" that will accept him as tutor. No less a person than Count Dohna commits his children to the care of the young licentiate; who accordingly disappears for awhile from the accustomed regions, and turns up in the dismal trans-Pomeranian Prussia, on the Dohna estates of Schlobitten and Finkenstein, and occasionally in the streets of Königsberg, anxious to find the house of an old gentleman named Immanuel Kant. In spite of intellectual solitude, of scanty book-supply, and purse uncomfortably light, he spent there three not unfruitful years. The affectionate, pious, domestic life of a refined and noble house gave him many new experiences; and, falling in also with his first preaching, it was far better, he confesses, for heart and character than the dry learning and cold theology and critical indifference of Berlin. *There* it was, as he thought, that the pale student mind in him became first suffused with the colouring of some Art-feeling and the glow of self-opening affections. He took thither all his negative rectitudes,—his abhorrence of the false, the vulgar, the incomplete: he brought thence his more genial heart for the true, the pure, the beautiful. Especially did he owe this to the eldest daughter of the family,—a pupil so blending intellectual aptitudes with graces natural and moral as to open to him a new conception of feminine excellence. What debt Frederike, in her turn, owed to him was never known: for in ten years the mutual account passed with the poor child into eternity, and the record of only the tutor's gratitude remains. Her brothers, however, grew up with warm attachment to him; never lost an opportunity in after years of carrying him off from his work for a week's visit to the family domain; and brought a clatter of smart officers about his lodgings whenever their military duties took them to Berlin. The relation of the tutor to the elders had not been without an occasional cloud, and in fact ended in a kind of storm. Hints are dropped, that the Countess was capable of blundering, in the children's les-

Digitized by Google

sons, over a Latin word,—to the amusement probably of the saucy boys; and that the tutor, when invoked, and obliged to compromise either mamma's Latinity or his own, had felt constrained to uphold the authority of the grammars in current use. His quiet judgment and self-respect, in always requiring trust where he was to have responsibility, secured the permanent regard of both the parents: though some hasty words of the Count, when unable to carry what the tutor disapproved, threw Schleiermacher on the world again. In breaking up to depart, he is astonished to find how many there are in the country all round that seem to love him: and as he trundled in the Postwagen out of those dreary Baltic levels, he left on them a light of kindly humanities which they never lost.

Meanwhile, an extraordinary change had been long observable in the tone of the army-chaplain's correspondence. It is no longer in the style of the Commination service. It is no longer scorched with fanatic fires, or blotted with bitter tears. It drops into speedy silence about Fritz's heresies, and sustains a wonderful cheerfulness under the prospect of his perdition. It begins to show, by other evidences than unpaid booksellers' bills, that there is a literary side to him. He wants his son's opinion about all sorts of books; especially about the new *Kritik aller Offenbarung*, which he half-attributes to Kant; and would like to hear something of it direct from Königsberg. It is evident that the *Critical Philosophy* is in high favour with him; and we soon find him expressing surprise at the bigotry which can shrink from the *Religion within the Limits of Reason*, or cast an unkindly look on the "good old moral philosopher, whose excellent spirit is conspicuous in all his works." In criticising Fritz's sermons, sent to him for the purpose, he holds up *Blair* as a perfect model. He recommends the careful study of Lessing's *Education of the Human Race*, of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, of Hemsterhuis, and Lord Bacon. And all this from the man who the other day insisted that the Bible was an inexhaustible cyclopædia, beyond which it was fatal to go! who denounced poor Fritz's latitudinarian curiosity as the expression of hopeless corruption, and scourged his "strong reasons" out upon the world with all the scorpions of the "evangelical" vocabulary! What can have come to him? Has he silently repented,—gone to school again with his son;—and in his latter days opened into sympathy with the young man's heresies? Alas! the explanation is less honourable to his conscience and his heart: and we quote with shame the following astounding confession:

"I could wish, my dear son, that you would read and ponder Lessing's *Education of the Human Race:* you would gain from it luminous

Digitized by Google

ideas on various matters much in dispute of late. And I will further suggest for your consideration whether my own course presents an example worthy of your imitation. For at least twelve years of my preaching, I was an actual unbeliever. I was at that time completely convinced that Jesus in his discourses had accommodated himself to the conceptions and even the prejudices of the Jews. But this opinion led me to the conclusion that I must *in like manner* bear myself discreetly towards the popular doctrine. I have never been able to feel myself at liberty to attack the article of the Godhead and Atonement of Jesus, because I was aware from Church history and my own experience of other men that, from the earliest period of Christianity, this doctrine had brought consolation and amendment to millions of men; and I adopted the habit of even using it, wherever the subject allowed, in its application to morality and the love of God and man, although I was not myself convinced of its truth. I could wish that, even though you should be unable to satisfy yourself of the legitimacy of this procedure, you would at least abstain from ever publicly attacking that doctrine" (vol. i. p. 89).

Not less illustrative are the following words on Fritz's sermons:

"Far be it from my wish to recommend Blair to you on his *declamatory* side; which, as even Mr. Sack [the translator] points out, is so very marked in the fifth sermon of the first volume. But this very instance shows us, on the one hand, that where conviction fails, declamation must take its place; and on the other, what great precaution he took not to infringe the established rule of doctrine. And this appears to me to be every Christian preacher's duty; in cases where he cannot believe in the objective truth of the type of doctrine accepted by him, nevertheless to hold himself bound to lay before his hearers what is subjective truth to them, as consistently as he can with reason, Scripture, and the end in view—their comfort, their progress in good, and their hope for the future" (vol. i. p. 118).

Of his misery in reading these guilty words Fritz is silent: what could he do, poor youth, but hold his peace, and give them no response? The light they threw on all that he had undergone was something dreadful. So the very doubts for which he had been bruised and cast out had all the while no terrors for the old man at all,—were even in his eyes signs of deeper insight, and a reflection of his own experience; not past experience only, but evidently present too! While the college years continued the father still wore,—to his son as to his soldiers,—the mask of orthodoxy: but now that the student had passed into the preacher, and by safe initiation had become "one of us," he was evidently deemed fit "to know good and evil," and the chaplain's secret was revealed. The profound moral insensibility with which the confession is made seems to us more revolting than the hypocrisy itself. If it at all expresses the state

Digitized by Google

of mind which, by ecclesiastical standard, may coexist with personal and professional repute, it suggests a spiritual hollowness beneath the modern church, which, in spite of solemn pretensions and fair look, must make it the instrument of universal demoralisation. How much young Schleiermacher's own heart was burdened with this apprehension may be seen from the following account of a clerical assembly:

"On Wednesday was the Synodical Meeting of this diocese: and the Provost had the kindness to invite me to it: and it cost me nearly the whole day. The affair left on me nothing but melancholy impressions. Oh, dear friend, what it is to be so thrown among five-and-thirty clergymen! Not that I was ashamed of being one myself: but with all my heart did I yearningly muse upon the time, no longer, I trust, so far distant, when that sort of thing will be unproducible. I shall not live to see it: but could I only contribute a little to bring it about! Of the openly disreputable men among them I will say nothing; and would even concede that some of that stamp must be expected among such a number, especially as long as the clerical income stands at a thousand dollars. But the universal degradation, the utter impenetrability towards every thing higher, the complete low-mindedness, rising no further than what the senses can appreciate! Observe, I was undoubtedly the only person whose heart breathed out a sigh: for I went about sounding and trying so hard, that had another been there, I should surely have found him" (vol. i. p. 320).

With all its uncongenialities, however, the Christian preacher's office drew him with irresistible attraction. During the uncertain year which followed his departure from the Dohnas, he had temptations offered him to take-up the schoolmaster's life; and was actually engaged as an assistant in the Friedrich-Werder Gymnasium at Berlin. But in the spring of 1794 he accepted an invitation as colleague to a retiring clergyman at Landsberg; wept a few "literary tears" on leaving the capital; became the fashion as preacher in his new position; devoted himself diligently to the instruction of the young in his parish; and began to earn the reputation which in 1796 brought him back to Berlin to occupy the pulpit of the Charité, and take his place among the rising celebrities of the capital. That crown to his hopes the father did not live to see. The old man, long harassed by the cares of his second family, and finding his "feathers all plucked," finally drooped, and lay down to die ere Fritz had been six months at Landsberg. The correspondence between them became increasingly affectionate to the end: and all the old man's better tastes and feelings seem to revive in the expanding life of his son: and we cannot help at last parting with him in peace, and being almost carried away by his children's scarce qualified expressions of reverence and love. Sister Charlotte

Digitized by Google

thenceforth succeeds to the paternal correspondence: but the loss of all the letters up to the autumn of 1797 transports us at once to a later stage. She is in her pious retirement at Gnadenfrei, full of such good affections and good works, full also of such morbid sufferings of body and mind, as are incident to a life with less in it of nature than of grace. He is in the social and literary stir of Berlin; already perhaps doing something to qualify the heathenism and scepticism of its intellectual tone; yet not without some traceable reaction of it on himself. Could we consult that good sister, she would say that Fritz's Christian baptism was never more nearly worn off than during the last few years of the century: her quick religious instinct evidently took alarm at the pictures he drew of his pursuits, his associates, his whole *entourage:* and after every allowance for her narrowness of view, we cannot but recognise a certain truth in her pure and simple perception. His mind, exposed to new and stimulating influences, was indeed rather enlarging its range than changing its centre: but when suddenly introduced to the world of art by the Schlegels and Tieck, and in his first deep captivity to Plato, and appealed to, at the opening of his poetic sense, by such a power as Goethe's, it is not wonderful if for a while his development was unequal, and needed other and deeper experiences to restore the balance. Precisely when his sentiment was receiving this richer colouring, he stood in presence of another influence likely in his case to become extreme. When men of pure, sensitive, and dependent nature are thrown out of a recluse life into the society of cultivated women, they are apt to be carried away by the surprise of a new and precious sympathy. They know not where to stop; and the more they are innocent of passion, the less have they of natural notice when the just limit of intimacy is reached. The tact which regulates these delicate relations cannot be extemporised by the clearest reason or the deepest sentiments: it is a complex product of natural feeling and of social experience: and so subtle is the play and so complete the fusion of their elements, that a counterfeit or a substitute is impossible. Schleiermacher brought into his first Berlin period no practised knowledge of men, a view of life purely ideal, a contempt for every thing conventional, and the kind of innocence which is ready to dispense with all but the inner securities of virtue. He was out of his element in the heavy, unsympathising, inapprehensive society of his own sex: he had not robustness enough for their noise, or sanguine pulse enough to compete with their animal spirits, or join in the rough hunt of their passion or ambition. In the companionship of cultivated women he found his inward life understood, the language of his susceptibilities interpreted; whilst the masculine force of

Digitized by Google

his nature was not overlooked from its spiritual quality; but the calm magnitude of his intellect, and the even courage and persistency of his will, rewarded him with that trust and allegiance which first completes the consciousness of manhood. The intimacies into which he was thus led were closer than the rule of usage would allow. As the first and most conspicuous of them was with a *Jewess*, it ran counter to every local prejudice, German and evangelical. The second had the additional element of being not only with a married lady, but with a lady not happily married: and Schleiermacher appears in the false position of doctrinally denouncing all such "merely external ties" as intrinsically null and void, and personally preoccupying the post of intending husband, should the law enable, and her choice determine her to exchange a formally for a really wedded life. The troubles incidental to this relation with Eleonore G. induced him to go into voluntary exile to Stolpe, where he resided as court-preacher for two years prior to his acceptance in 1804 of a Theological Chair and the University pulpit at Halle. During their separation, he honourably refused to make any secret about their correspondence: she found embarrassment from the arrival of his letters at home; and after long wavering, determined to break off all intercourse with him, and acquiesce in her lot. Here is the letter in which he reports the catastrophe to his Jewish friend, Henriette Herz:

"It is all over, dear Jette, she has given me up! She has done as you thought, and as I was not prepared to expect after all her expressions to me which had come since. It is well that I have written her the enclosed letter (which please send her) in my first and calmer mood. It is different with me now. Last night, when quite undressed and ready to get into bed, I stood for two hours with my arms resting on the table: it came over me in all its gall and bitterness. And she, poor thing, will yet have to hear what it is to me. She feels already that it is costing her her life, and she will die before long. I can wish outright that she may be the first to die: for, did she survive me, one of her repentances would come over her again. But she will have to make haste: for strain and sorrow will soon turn to poison in my case too. As yet I have thought little of myself: but a cold shudder seizes me when the thought comes. What is to become of me here? the ground is on fire under my feet. Then too I have a horror of the bachelor life,—no love,—no duty,—a mockery of God and men. I must betake myself to domestic life, must do my part in constituting a family and educating children. Here there is nothing of the sort for me. I sigh for Berlin; there I should find more advantages for even the wretched calling of the scholar,—yes, wretched enough it seems to me, if the root of love is not there, and the beloved of one's heart does not flit among the books and papers. If she does not shun you,—if she puts herself in your way,—dear Jette, as you love me, be affec-

Digitized by Google

tionate and gentle to her, take her to your heart, let her breathe out there her deep sufferings, and let her not feel for having made your friend unutterably miserable. Yes, dear Jette, when we meet and stand together on the rocks by the sea, you will have at your side a poor fellow who, but for you and a dear soul or two besides, would find all this upper air as desolate as that deep below. I can no more, dear friend; I break in pieces with sighs and tears. And alas, it is only morning! Still be my comfort and stay; stand by me as long as you can, come what may. Would that you might be something to her too, who will be a thousandfold more unhappy than I" (vol. i. p. 381).

Of his correspondence with Eleonore G. the editor has withheld a great deal. In the portion given we find nothing which in any way reconciles us to this kind of questionable and dangerous relation: and the theory and usages of married life which render it possible remain, even under Schleiermacher's pure and skilful management, conspicuously unsound and morally deteriorating. Say what he will, his nature does not move freely in these letters: they want determinate character: they speak neither a frank, gossipy, sympathising friendship; nor manly, healthful, joyous love. Their tenderness makes you nervous and anxious; their tone is not *respectful;* their thought is not firm. In fact, we could not have listened with much satisfaction to our Court-preacher in those Stolpe days; and should decidedly have objected to call him in as spiritual counsellor in some of the most momentous problems of human life. The coterie into which he had been thrown at Berlin seems to have had an unpleasant habit of criticising the married life of all their neighbours, and hitting what blots could be found or fancied. He dwells, with an emphasis quite false for English society, and, we should hope, for German too, on the rarity of a happy marriage. He lets his imagination try the experiment of unions that might have been; says, that if Henriette Herz had been at liberty for him, it would have made a decided matrimonial success; and avows that he often longs to mend the misadjustments of the world by exchange of wives and husbands among three or four pairs. It could not fail to appear like a practical comment on this indulgence of fancy, when, in their own immediate circle, Madame Veit, without divorce or legal separation, was withdrawn from her home by Friedrich Schlegel: and the distrust was sure to be deepened when his objectionable novel *Lucinde* was defended, under the influence of a generous illusion, in a special publication of Schleiermacher's.* It is not surprising that a clergyman of doubtful orthodoxy found enemies to misconstrue so questionable a defiance of established moral guarantees; that his influential patron Sack remonstrated,

* Vertraute Briefe über Schlegel's Lucinde.

Digitized by Google

and early advised him to withdraw from Berlin till he could recover himself and return into a different circle in a different mood; and that he had again and again to pacify the solicitudes of the good sister Charlotte, who plainly bore no good-will to those very superior Jewesses of the Thiergarten, trembled for the balance of Fritz's sensitive nature on such a tight-rope of social relations, and breathlessly wished him on *terra firma* again. That he may speak for himself, we subjoin a few of the words by which he sought to reassure her:

"You are afraid of my tender and intimate relations with persons of the other sex. I grant that in this you are quite right: there is something dangerous in it; and seen from a distance, where there is nothing to qualify the general impression, the danger looks greater than on the spot. To watch over myself in this matter is my continual care: I call myself to account about its most trivial particular: and so long as I do this, there is no need, I think, for me to break off any relation which on other grounds is of essential importance to me, which conduces to my culture, and is the source of various good. Thus in regard to B., I know that a very good influence has been exerted upon her, due just to the highly confidential friendship prevailing between us, which led her to open her heart unreservedly about every circumstance and every sentiment;—I refer to the *inward* influence, without taking at all into the account that opportunity was thus afforded me of being also outwardly serviceable to her in cases of difficulty, where otherwise she would often perhaps have taken a wrong step. Henriette Herz's life is certainly quite different, calm and quiet, and with no such fear of shipwreck as in B.'s case: and I cannot therefore be of any such service in this instance. Her tone of feeling and character is also much firmer, so that she can be self-dependent and does not stand in need of me. Still in another respect I form an essential element in her existence: her views, her tone of sentiment, her insight, I can variously supplement, as she also does with mine. Nothing of the nature of passion can ever come between us; if put to the most decisive proof, on that point we stand quite beyond its reach. Set it not down to self-deception that I speak so confidently on this: I have qualified myself to do so by long experience and careful observation: and I believe, if you saw us together but for an hour, you would have the same conviction. I shall always attach myself more closely to women than to men: it lies very deep in my nature, dear Lotte; for there is so much in my tone of feeling that men seldom understand. Unless, therefore, I am to dispense with true friendship,—which surely you will be far from requiring,—I cannot help remaining in this otherwise dangerous position;—a position, however, which, occupied with this understanding, ceases to be really so dangerous" (vol. i. p. 212).

That Schleiermacher's personal self-reliance, in all these critical relations, was entirely justified, there cannot be a moment's doubt. If censure is due to him, it is for consulting too exclusively his own strength and his own needs, for some sentimental

Digitized by Google

relaxation of moral judgment in dealing with aberrations exemplified in a friend, and for tampering with ideal safeguards of human intercourse which nothing can replace.

In 1797 there was a select literary club in Berlin, called the Wednesday Society, where papers were read, and critical estimates made of new authors and new works. Here it was that Schleiermacher first met Friedrich Schlegel, and was filled with admiration at his originality, his wit, his impulsive openness, and the energy which had enabled him, at five-and-twenty, to amass an incredible store of knowledge. A friendship sprung up between the two men: they speedily resolved to live together: and here is a pleasant account, written to sister Charlotte, of the first days of the experiment,—perhaps the best portrait ever drawn of the younger Schlegel:

"It makes a glorious change in my existence to have Schlegel in the house. What a novelty for me, that by just opening the door I have a rational soul to talk with, that I have a 'good morning' to give and take the moment I wake, that I have some one opposite me at table, and some one to share, while it is on me, the good-humour I get into of an evening! Schlegel is usually up in the morning an hour before me, because my eyes cannot bear candle-light then, and I therefore contrive my night so as to have my sleep out not before half-past eight. He lies in bed, however, and reads; and it is the clink of his coffee-cup that usually wakes me. Then he can open the door as he lies that divides my sleeping closet from his room; and so we begin our morning chat. When I have had my breakfast, we work for some hours without taking any notice of one another: but in general we make a little break in the forenoon to eat an apple—having a common stock of the choicest sorts; talking over usually the subjects of our study. Then for the second batch of work till dinner at half-past one. I get my dinner, you know, from the Charité: Schlegel has his fetched from a restaurant. Whichever comes first we consume together; then the other; followed by a few glasses of wine; so that we spend something like an hour over our dinner. Of the afternoon no such definite account can be given. I must confess, alas, that usually I am the first to run off and the last to come home. Not that the half-day is wholly given up to social enjoyments: several times I attend lectures,—and also give some,—of course *privatissime*, only to a good friend or two: and it is only after this that I go where my fancy takes me. Coming home between ten and eleven in the evening, I find Schlegel still up, but apparently only waiting to bid me good night and be soon off to bed. That is my time, however, for setting to; and I generally go on working till near two o'clock: and between that and half-past eight one can get plenty of sleep. Our friends have been pleased to call this chumming of ours our marriage: they all agree that I must be the lady: and toss the matter about in all sorts of jest and earnest. A few times since Schlegel's arrival I have stayed the whole evening at home, and we have taken a snug tea together from seven to ten, and

Digitized by Google

fairly talked ourselves out over it. But I dare say you will want to know what I think of the man himself now that we are thrown together in this closest kind of acquaintance. I really do not know how much I have already told you about him: and so here goes for a bit of a sketch of him once for all. Intellectually he is so out-and-out my superior, that on this point I can speak of him only with great reverence. With what rapidity and depth he seizes the spirit of every science, every system, every author, with what high impartiality of criticism he assigns its place to each, in what a noble organic system all his attainments stand, redeeming his labours from chance-work and giving them the sequence of a great plan,—with what perseverance he follows up every thing which he has once begun,—all this I have for the first time learned fully to appreciate in the short interval since the opportunity has been given me of seeing, as it were, his ideas arise and grow. But doubtless you will be more curious about his tone of feeling and disposition than his intellect and genius. It is extremely childlike,—that is certainly the chief feature; open and joyous, fresh in all his expressions, a deadly enemy of all fuss and forms, vehement in his wishes and inclinations, generally full of goodwill, but, as children are apt to be, a little suspicious and prone to antipathies of various kinds. His character at present is not so fixed, or his opinions of men and things so definite, but that he would be easy to guide by any one to whom he had once given his confidence. What I must say, however, I miss in him is the tender feeling and fine sense for the winning trifles of life, and the delicate expression of refined sentiment, through which small things often reveal the whole temperament of the soul. Just as he prefers books of large print, he likes men too of features great and strong. The merely tender and beautiful does not enchain him much, because from the analogy of his own disposition he is too apt to think every thing weak which does not look fiery and strong. However little this peculiar want in him abates my love for him, it makes it impossible for me to reveal to him and render intelligible not a few sides of my nature. He will be always on a larger scale than I: but I shall get to apprehend and know him more completely than he will me. His outer man is more striking than handsome. A figure not exactly graceful or well filled-in, but yet strong-built and vigorous, a very characteristic head, a pale face, very dark hair cut short round the head without powder or curling,—a dress of no great elegance, but smart and gentlemanlike; there you have the outer presentment of my better half for the time being" (vol. i. p. 176).

The friendship thus enthusiastically commenced was not destined to be a life-long affair. The little speck of uncongeniality already visible in the foregoing sketch slowly spread and deepened, till it ate into the heart of the relation, and brought it into a consumptive state. Schlegel was wayward and exacting, and grew jealous of the hours spent with Henriette Herz. His reckless, dashing ways raised scandals which severely taxed the forbearance of his friend; first the lamentable Veit affair; then,

Digitized by Google

notorious insolvency, not without evasions which "in any other man would certainly have been dishonesties," but, we suppose, were something more ornamental in him; till at last intimacy with him incurred the misgivings of all one's friends, and could be maintained only by way of chivalrous fidelity. Nor was he always considerate of the frugal income of the preacher of the Charité. After he had quitted Berlin, he would pop in for a day or two as guest at the old quarters; remain for weeks; and with his many wants and spoiled ways consume the whole bag of dollars which had been getting heavy for sister Charlotte. But perhaps the crowning vexation was the discovery that "his perseverance" was altogether an illusion. It was he who first projected the translation of Plato, which in the end Schleiermacher executed alone. It was to have been a joint affair; the agreement with Frommann the publisher was made in Schlegel's name; the work was divided between them: but Schlegel's part is not forthcoming; he proves fertile chiefly in original critical discoveries,—such as that the Symposium is not genuine! and after procrastination adequate to exhaust the patience of a German bookseller (and what more can we say?), the task is intrusted to Schleiermacher single-handed, just four years from the first start. With this dissolution of partnership Schlegel for the most part disappears; his faults to the last too generously excused by his friend; who declares that, though repelled by a nature so passionate on the side of sense, he cannot help loving him more than he ever could love either Goethe or Schelling, with all their vast intellectual power.

It was during his Schlegel period at Berlin, that he prepared, anonymously, his celebrated *Discourses on Religion*, and his *Monologues*. To those who know these remarkable works, it is highly interesting to trace in these letters the history of their growth; the devices for preserving the incognito; the anxieties about their emergence from the censor's office; and the first reception by the world. But as the interest turns on the significance of particular passages,—the tendency of an argument or the tone of a peroration,—we cannot avail ourselves of it without fuller notice of his works than consists with the exhibition of his life. Both books were received with the vehement feeling which marks a conscious crisis of tendency. They presented a religious rallying-point for the rising characteristics of the time,—characteristics which already found expression in the literary mysticism of Hardenberg, the absolute idealism of Schelling, the faith-philosophy of Jacobi, and the Romanticism of Tieck. The worn-out dogmatic systems and uncritical scripturalism of orthodox churches had not, indeed, been able to make effectual resistance to the encroachments of metaphysicians like Kant and

Digitized by Google

scholars like Michaelis and Eichhorn: but they still preserved a venerable look, and represented an absent sanctity, so long as there was nothing but French Deism or a Königsberg moralism or a Fichtean egoism to take their place. Till some positive direction could be impressed upon theology, things remained provisionally as they were;—with little belief and less comfort in the present, but nevertheless waiting for a "consolation" yet to come. The *Discourses* seemed to bring the advent near. They were deeply tinctured with a genuine piety,—the evidently ascendant feeling in a mind philosophically free and logically acute. Yet they pledged themselves to no traditional orthodoxy: they exposed the jejuneness of a self-reliant morality: they denounced the insufficiency of the so-called "Natural Religion:" they insisted on the consciousness of absolute dependence as fundamental and indestructible in our nature, and on the need of a positive religion in response to it: and they rested the claim of Christianity on the effectual answer it has given to the infinite yearnings of the human mind, and the realisation of spiritual fraternity it has afforded. It may be allowed that, in his reaction from a hard, external, Jewish Theism on the one hand, and a forensic drama of historical salvation on the other, Schleiermacher's appeal to the mystic sense of Divine Immanence in the world incurred some danger of melting away the personality of both God and man: and his celebrated judgment against the doctrine of a *personal* immortality unambiguously indicates this tendency. But we must remember, in estimating him, to what a condition the notion of "Personality" had been reduced by both philosophers and divines, and ask ourselves whether, in the exercises of reverence and love, it was a thing to be got rid of as a limitation, or to be cherished as a glory. On the whole, few, we believe, will now deny that, in claiming an independent ground of religion, in delivering it from its contingent existence as a derivative inference of science, or a necessary sanction of morals, or a critical conclusion from testimony, Schleiermacher lifted it into a higher region, and restored to it its own. His later and more scientific writings,—especially his *Glaubens-Lehre*,—variously modified, defined, and completed his theory; and exhibit his genius in its ultimate depth and balance. But the *Discourses* were fit for the service of the hour. They had the brilliancy, originality, and breadth needful for intense impression. They were accordingly the signal for a new era in theology: and the impulse they commenced is still fresh and growing.

Some years after, he noticed, not without pain, the influence which his *Monologues* had exercised on the academic youth of the time: and in his chair at Halle found himself indebted to

Digitized by Google

them for a somewhat inconvenient reputation. Whether a temporary contact with Fichte,—just removed from his professorship and living privately in Berlin,—affected his mode of thought, we cannot say: but certain it is, that the tone of ethical pride and stoic self-assertion pervading this little book is much more in the spirit of the current philosophy than of his own religion. He sometimes says that he has "fits of genuine Christianity," when he is conscious of being but a plant in the great soil of humanity, depending for spiritual life on the infinite elements. The *Monologues* must have been written in some interval between the fits: and when his maturer mind had settled deep in the Divine "sense of dependence," they might well appear to him out of date. One friendship, however, they procured for him which opened a new chapter in his life. They had powerfully fascinated a young clergyman of the island of Rügen, Ehrenfried von Willich, and prepared him, on occasion of a casual meeting at Prenzlow in 1801, to rush at once into the most cordial relations with Schleiermacher. Willich, shortly afterwards appointed to a church in Stralsund, was an intelligent, honest, hearty friend. But, as usual with Schleiermacher, the intimacy passes on beyond its original object to settle with stronger attachment on the lady members of the same circle. Two orphan sisters of good family were Willich's neighbours in Rügen: the elder, Charlotte von Kathen, whose beauty and goodness have been celebrated by Arndt, was married and living on her inherited estate; and under her roof dwelt, or often stayed, the younger, Henriette von Mühlenfels, a simple, sprightly, affectionate girl of fourteen. There it was that Willich made her his own, and installed her at Stralsund as Predigerinn at the unecclesiastical age of sixteen. Willich's friends were Schleiermacher's friends: and during the Stolpe exile, the shadow that settled for him on Berlin was relieved and balanced by this Northern light upon Rügen. In the correspondence with these two sisters are found some of the choicest things in the volumes: his tone towards the elder being grave and almost reverential; towards the younger, in response to her fresh childlike confidence, at once bright and fatherly. The year (1804) of Willich's marriage was also that of Schleiermacher's removal to Halle; and the interchange of ideas and sympathies under conditions of life new to both gives a special warmth and vivacity to the letters of that period. It was in reference to the waning life of one of Charlotte von Kathen's children that the following words, comparing the two bitterest forms of bereavement, were written from Halle to one of her friends:

"A painful incident has much engaged me here of late. A young man from Berlin, much liked by me there, arrives here with his wife and all his children on a visit to her foster-parents and the companions

Digitized by Google

of her girlhood;—for it was here she was brought up and he got to know and love her; and whilst here, she dies. In him sorrow wears an aspect truly noble and sacred: and for want of any better word of comfort, I could only say that to see him thus made me wish I might be spared such loss as his till I had such strength. Surely it is sadder for husband to lose the wife of his heart than for mother a child. A child is but an offshoot of the plant living entire: but the wife!—the very crown of all, the innermost heart, whence the life is put forth of all that gives bloom and shade and fruit! With her all is gone, and what remains can be nothing but memory,—a mere shadow-life. Yet daily and anxiously do I wish that our friend may yet be spared the deep sorrow which has so long seemed to impend. How much has she suffered, poor soul, since her letter, which gave hope that the darling child would recover! and I still cannot give up the hope that appeared so sure. The first call to render back a child to earth and heaven,—to drop into the grave the vaticinations of the holiest love;—it must indeed be a deep and rending sorrow" (vol. ii. p. 27).

But the correspondence soon begins to bear trace of other than private griefs. At the beginning of 1806 Schleiermacher, who has never yet had due investiture as University Preacher, finds his church suddenly turned over to commissariat officers, and stuffed full of corn and magazine stores: and it is only by threatening to accept a parish at Bremen that he stirs up the government to find him a place for the Academic public worship. In truth, Prussian statesmen had other work on hand than the fitting-up of even College-pulpits. The storm, long darkening in the West, was fast approaching: the arrogant dictation of Napoleon, after dragging the Berlin government into fruitless humiliation and dishonour, had at last become intolerable: and even the vacillating and reluctant king was constrained to consent to war. It fell suddenly on a country neither morally nor materially prepared; corrupted by French influence, divided in counsels, insensible to its danger, and blinded with military conceit. Some months before the outbreak Schleiermacher endeavoured to prepare his Rügen friends for the impending crisis: writing to Charlotte von Kathen in June, he says:

"In what heart am I amid this warlike disquiet? Ah, dear friend, I often think of you all with real anxiety and of your beautiful land. There has been ever-changing occasion to do so for several months. I have no longer any fear of a war between our two kings (Sweden and Prussia): but there is ground for serious apprehension that the French now evacuating South Germany may turn against Sweden. In that case, dear friend, should your king resolve on a serious defence, be of good heart, and sacrifice all to gain all; and all that you keep set down as gain. Make up your mind that individual escape, individual self-maintenance, is not to be thought of; that the life of us all is rooted

Digitized by Google

in German freedom and nationality; and that *that* is the stake. You would not choose,—would you?—to be spared any personal danger or suffering, with a certainty of seeing our generation to come given up to a baser slavery, and compelled by every device to receive inoculation from the low sentiment of a people corrupt to the core. Believe me, there awaits us, sooner or later, a general conflict, whose stake will be—our Religion, our character, our intellectual culture, no less than our external liberty and property;—a conflict which must be encountered,—which is beyond the resources of kings with their hired troops,—which nations must fight out along with their kings,—which will unite people and princes in a nobler way than has been known for centuries; and in which each of us,—ay, every soul,—must share as the common cause requires. . . . . I breathe the thundery air, and wish that the storm would be quick and bring the crash: for as to its blowing over, the time, I am convinced, is past for that" (vol. ii. p. 63).

It is remarkable that in these noble words we have,—with one exception,—the first notice in Schleiermacher's letters of political affairs. The execution of Lewis XVI. had drawn from him in 1793 a characteristic expression of opinion: but, were that one exception removed, the reader could never know that the dates beneath his eye were those of the greatest events and intensest social fermentation of modern history. So much,—may we not say?—for living in a country where the citizens' politics are for the most part *done for them;* and for corresponding chiefly with its ladies, for whom the State and such historical personalities remain uninteresting abstractions. Once roused, however, by the near crisis, Schleiermacher is equal to all demands:

"I exult," he says, September 15th, "in the inevitable war against the tyrants, and am well pleased at the courageous bearing which is general among troops and people here. We have a considerable corps in the neighbourhood. The king too is expected; and then, it is hoped, a movement forward is to be made to engage the French, as soon as they turn up. I have often felt impelled to publish something political, could I but have found time for it. I often let fall things of the kind from the pulpit; not at all in the style, however, that I hear from other preachers" (vol. ii. p. 67).

Within three weeks of the date of this letter, war was declared: within a month of it, the hopes it expressed were utterly crushed, and the tide of disaster rolled up to the very desk where it was written. On the 10th October fell the head of the national party, Prince Louis Ferdinand, at the battle of Saalfeld:—on the 14th, the strength of the Prussian monarchy was swept away at Auerstadt and Jena:—and next evening it was known at Halle that their town would be the next victim, unless the reserve could turn the French advance. The auto-

Digitized by Google

biography of Professor Steffens has already made us familiar with the incidents of the French occupancy of the town: here are some of the experiences of his friend and fellow-sufferer:

"The plundering was detestable enough, but still not so bad as one is apt to suppose that sort of thing. Immediately after the battle, several hussars, through the heedlessness of the people living on the ground-floor, forced their way into the house and up to our story. Steffens and Gass were there at the time. All three of us had to give up our watches,—Gass, his silver-money too (Steffens had come to the end of his): there were only a few dollars of mine for them in the place; but they took all my shirts but five, and all the silver spoons but two. At the fight itself we had a narrow escape. Steffens came in the morning (of the 16th October), and bade us go with him to his house, if we had a mind to see an engagement. And there we had a very good view of the attack on the bridge. But when I observed that the Prussian cannon were dismounted, and that the position would be lost, I persuaded Steffens to come on to us, because his house would be too much exposed. We made as much haste as possible; but before Hannah and I had reached our street, there was firing in the town behind us, and Steffens, with his child in his arms, got almost into the midst of the throng of retreating Prussians and advancing French. During the following days, I had a dreadful nuisance of quartering to endure; and so had the hostesses of our lodgings,—poor girls, with a couple of old aunts, and nothing in their purse: so that I was in fear of the soldiers' brutality, and we spent a night all together in most inconvenient style in Konopack's rooms. After this some officers and soldiers of the guard came into the house; and, for two nights, I was myself obliged, from want of further space below, to accommodate in my large room a secretary and two *employés* at head-quarters. The officers quartered below frightened the lodging-house keepers with the most dreadful reports of sacking and firing the town, and gave us quite a tragic-comic night. But a storm, almost as bad, had actually burst upon us already the evening before, viz. the decree for the dispersion of the students. Let me, for the moment, look at this only on the economic side, in order to give you an idea of our position. If peace is made soon, it is highly improbable that Halle will continue Prussian. If it becomes Saxon, the University may be extinguished; or, if it even remains, my remaining will be out of the question, because they are so rigidly Lutheran in Saxony. If it falls to the lot of a French prince, I should on no account choose to remain; but as long as there is yet a corner of Prussian territory, I would withdraw to it" (vol. ii. p. 69).

The "Hannah" mentioned in this passage was his half-sister, afterwards the wife of Arndt. He had brought her to live with him at Halle, and she shared with him the tedious months that followed. The University suspended, the salaries not paid, the government incapable, the capital in the hands of the enemy, the official classes cringing, and the whole country prostrate, what could a poor professor do, but use his enforced leisure in

Digitized by Google

keeping up his own spirit and his friends' against ignoble acquiescence or despair. And this assuredly he did. In spite of physical weakness, induced by want of sufficient fire, food, and wine, and in face of spies and traitors, he preached high-hearted political sermons, shirking nothing, and bating no breath that should flow strong from the Christian and the patriot.

In close sequence on his own privations, came anxieties about his northern friends. In November, the French occupied Hamburg. They meant to sweep on to Dantzig, and Stralsund lay between. Schleiermacher had counselled Willich to send his wife and child (a second was near) to Rügen in case of approaching siege. But, to provide also for the case of her not choosing to leave her husband, he had written cheerily to her, reporting the brave bearing and escapes of Steffens' wife and child, and assuring her that her motherhood would conciliate the soldiers' respect for her and hers. Stralsund was besieged in February; and on the 13th March his Henriette wrote thus to Schleiermacher:

"Dear, dear Schleier! my beloved friend, my father! O my God, my God! how am I to tell it you and you to hear it? Schleier, I am no longer the happy Jette, whose sacred blessings were your heart's delight. My dear Schleier, prepare to hear the uttermost of bitterness: the happy Jette is now a poor, afflicted, lone-weeping Jette. O my Schleier,—let it come out and be over,—the dreadful word;—my Ehrenfried, my fondly deeply loved Ehrenfried,—is with me no more:—he lives in another world! O Schleier, can you take it in? can you conceive that I have lived through it? I cannot understand it myself,—this calmness with which I have borne it, and shall bear it. How I long to open to you my whole heart! Yes, indeed, Schleier, you have cause enough to weep for me, but you may calm yourself again; God is with me in his strength; I do not faint or despair; I still live wholly in the feeling of *his* love and *mine;* he is ever in my heart; I love him with the entire capacity of my soul's power and yearning. O Schleier, in the midst of my sorrow there are yet blessed moments, when I vividly feel what a love ours was, and that surely this love is eternal, and it is impossible God can destroy it, for God himself is love. Schleier, I bear this life whilst nature will; for I have still work to do for the children,—his and mine: but, O God, with what longing, what foreshadowings of unutterable blessedness, do I gaze across into that world where he lives! What joy for me to die! Schleier,—shall I not find him again? O my God! I implore you, Schleier, by all that is dear to you and sacred, give me, if you can, the certain assurance of finding and knowing him again. Tell me your inmost faith on this, dear Schleier; oh, if it fails, I am undone. It is for this that I live, for this that I submissively and quietly endure,—this is the one only outlook that sheds a light on my dark life,—to find him again, to live for him again, to bless him again. O God, it cannot be;—it

Digitized by Google

cannot be destroyed, it is but interrupted. I can never be happy again without him. O Schleier, speak to my poor heart. Tell me what you believe. O if he too should be longing and trying to keep the remembrance of me, perhaps often hovering round me unseen! O how my poor heart is tossed hither and thither with surmises of hope and doubt! Yet no! the doubts are little more than passing thoughts: this I feel as eternal consolation that does not pass, our love was the divine reality, death cannot annihilate it. O my Schleier, how I long for you! You will be my comfort and stay: I feel such an inward trust in you; I shall tell you every thing that has come to me in this sad time. O Schleier, how you too will mourn over your dear faithful friend! Oh! how could I be so happy? with what delight, when I was beside him, did I look forward to the mother's joy again! now I shall have many a tear to shed over the little one's cradle. My Ehrenfried was ill only eight days of nervous fever: I was always hopeful; I thought it could not be: I nursed him with tenderest love, and he was ever so gentle and kind and affectionate. But oh, at last, for some days, the fever was so high, that he was no longer himself: bitter remembrance, yet not unmixed with sweetness! how in his delirium his love for me was ever breaking through! after the illness had quite obscured his reason, he still called me by sweet names. The last word which he said to me was when I asked him, 'You don't know your Jette still?' 'Yes, Jette, my sweet bride.' O Schleier, what meaning and what truth—his bride! that I am! and I will make myself worthy to be wholly united with him again,—to be wholly his own. Do you know when it is that I feel the grasp of the sorrow too bitterly? It is when I think,—'in that future the old things will go for nothing; whoever is worthiest of him will be nearest to him; and O, many of those who love him are worthier than I:' and when I think 'his soul is resolved back,—quite melted away in the great All,—the old is quite gone by, it will never come to recognition again,' O Schleier, this I cannot bear: O speak to me, dear, dear! Farewell, Schleier, I have so much to say to you, yet now perhaps it will be some time first. However, you will know from this how it is with me. I suffer much; but inward calm and outward composure never quite give way. Your Jette" (vol. ii. p. 82).

Did ever stricken soul more purely speak?—truly a cry "*de profundis!*" What a tone to break out of the noise of war! to think that siege can be set to such holy music! In such utterances of infinite sorrow and aspiration,—even in the instinctive shudder with which doubts are tried and dashed away,—there is an irresistible persuasiveness that no ingenuities of evidence or speculation can approach. The native affinities of human goodness,—the capacious thirst of human love,—are laid bare, and show the true measure of the life to which they belong. But how in such a moment, when every word may have so terrible a reality, shall Schleiermacher deal with these passionate questionings; and from a distance, upon the dumb paper, with-

Digitized by Google

out the modulating voice, soothe that poor spirit, that wants the *one* and dreads "the All"? Some only of his words can we find space to give:

"My poor dear child, could I but press thee in thy tears to my heart! I too have hot bitter tears to shed; and we would mingle them. Oh! to see so precious a happiness broken! You know how my heart clung to it. Yet you set me such a beautiful example. Your sorrow is so pure and holy; it has nothing which your father could wish otherwise. Let us count this sorrow among the highest treasures of our life, and love it as we do our departed, and with quiet sadness conform ourselves to the eternal and holy disposal of God. But you come to me and tell me I am to dissipate your doubts. It is only, however, the images of fancy in her hour of travail that you want me to confirm. Dear Jette, what can I say? Certainty is not given us as to what lies beyond this life. Mistake me not; certainty, I mean, for the imagination, which insists on seeing every thing in definite forms: but else is it supremely certain, and nothing would be certain if this were not, that there is no death, no extinction for the spirit. True it is, that in the personal life the spirit does not find its essence, but only makes its apparition,—to be renewed, we know not how: all here is beyond our knowledge; we can only imagine. But in your sacred sorrow let your loving pious fancy shape its visions freely, and forbid it not. For pious fancy it is, I know, and can never wish any thing which would be at variance with the eternal disposal of God: and so all that it paints will be true, if you only quietly let it be as it will. And so I can give you assurance that your love will for ever have what it desires. You surely cannot now wish that Ehrenfried,—O God, the dear name, how it comes to me, now that I write it!—you surely cannot wish that he should return into this life; because it would be contrary to the eternal plan, which every one prefers to any single and separate wish. For this present life your love covets no more than to bear him about in your heart, to keep his memory, his image, indelibly with you, as a most living and holy presence; and to let him live again in yourself, and anew in your sweet children,—that suffices you. For the future, you do not at present know what possibly or rightly would suffice you; because you know not the disposals there. But when once there, you will know them, and will then feel no more desire than now of any thing that would be at variance with them, and be just as sure of full and blessed content.

When your imagination brings before you the idea of a melting-away into the great All, let it not, dear child, lay on you any touch of bitter sorrow. Do but think of it as a merging not into death but into life, and that the highest life. It is indeed *that* after which we all strive in this life, only that we never reach it,—viz. to live simply in the divine whole to which we belong, and to put away from us the pretension to set up for ourselves, as if we could be our own. If he now is living in God, and you love him eternally in God as you loved and knew God in him, can you think of any thing sublimer and more glorious? Is not this the highest end of love, in comparison with which

Digitized by Google

every thing which clings only to the personal life and arises thence, is nothing? But when you call up before your thought new investitures of being, corresponding with those of the present life, and dream that while others are near your beloved, you may be far,—in this there is nothing, dear daughter; it is a mere spectre; and you must shun it. Love is assuredly the power that draws minds together, — the great eternal law of their nature. Is there, then, any one that loves him more than you? or any other that he loves more than he does you? Do you not belong to one another as segments of one life? Oh! as sure as my holy joy in your union is one of the dearest feelings of my heart, so it is with you, and to eternity nothing can ever come between you" (vol. ii. p. 84).

Whether Henriette's problem, — the problem of which thought and sorrow never tire, — was laid to rest for her by these careful words, remains untold. Scarcely were they in her hands before her heart was recalled to this world, yet not without the tincture of another, by the birth of her fatherless boy. Her artless, fresh, confiding letters are soon resumed; and they so lay open her whole nature at the feet of Schleiermacher, that we are hardly surprised to find his half-paternal sentiment towards her gradually changing into a tenderer affection. After the lapse of about a year and a half, he makes a summer journey to Rügen; and she engages herself to become his wife. He was just double her age:—on their marriage, in March 1809, she was twenty-one and he was forty:—but her sad experience had given a peculiar moral maturity: and the difference between them was perhaps no unfit balance to his great susceptibility and dependence on the side of the affections. An earlier, more equal, less protective relation, might have been less happy for his stability and force of character. The letters between them during the nine months prior to their marriage are too numerous for the general purpose of these volumes, and might advantageously have been thinned by the editor: especially as they were written at a time of deepest political anxiety; and the reader looks for allusions to public affairs with an eagerness which makes him impatient of lovers' diffuseness and iteration.

Of Schleiermacher's enumerated contingencies for Halle, the place experienced the worst. It was included within the new kingdom of Westphalia under Jerome Bonaparte. A form of prayer for the king and queen was issued and enjoined on the clergy for weekly use in the churches. Schleiermacher declined to compromise his nationality by obedience, and quitted Halle for Berlin. As soon as the insecure and miserable peace of the autumn of 1807 was concluded, the project began to be entertained of constituting a University in Berlin. This was one of

Digitized by Google

the measures devised by the heads of the patriotic party for rallying the national spirit and keeping alive the forces of German genius till an hour of opportunity should set them free: on this very account the king hesitated, and sycophants of the French party dissuaded. But Napoleon could not forbid a step which his own tyranny, in cancelling Halle and carving out Westphalia, had necessitated: and the enlightened counsels of William von Humboldt prevailed. Had the project fallen through, Schleiermacher, to whom it assigned professorial duties from the first, would have gone, on his marriage, to settle at Frankfort.

The University was born in a time of sorrow; and could expect no festive years at first. From 1809 to 1813, the deepest political darkness brooded over Germany; and every Prussian conspicuous enough to be noticed by the jealousy of the French oppressor had to choose between open servility and tacit conspiracy. Schleiermacher was so well known to be in closest connection and sympathy with the band of men who had resolved on recovering a national life, that he had already, at an early period of the French occupancy, been marked and reprimanded for disaffection. In December 1808, he writes:

"I was intending to say plenty more to you: but what do you think intervenes? A carriage drives up: a French officer steps out, comes up here, and desires me to accompany him to Marshal Davoust. Two other gentlemen besides were seated in the carriage: and all that it came to was this; Davoust addressed us, saying that we were marked as hot-headed disturbers and so forth. To me the whole thing was very droll: I was obliged to play the part of interpreter for the others, and went through the character with all gravity. The others were people wholly unknown to me, in no way friends of mine. Lucky folks now-a-days are the quite unknown: and I owe my special honour to some stupid report about my preaching" (vol. ii. p. 178).

He continued, however, with quiet constancy, using both chair and pulpit in preparing for a worthier time; and without deluding himself with any hopes of speedy political regeneration: in September 1811 he writes to Charlotte von Kathen in Sweden:

"A dismal picture certainly does your whole condition present. Were it of any use to you, I would describe to you the aspect of things in many districts of our State, especially in Prussia,—a hundred times worse than with you. There is nothing for it but to give up all thought of outward well-being, and make up our mind that before improvement can begin on that side, we must go through the most frightful upturnings and desolations: and we must be content to provide for their effectual power and success when they come, by giving

Digitized by Google

right direction to the mind of our people. To this I address myself by every means at my command: how long I may be able to do it, God knows" (vol. ii. p. 259).

It was not till the spring of 1813, when the remnant of the last French army was straggling home from Russia, that the smothered fires of national hope broke out again, and the German powers were reunited in a common effort to relieve Europe of the scourge it had endured so long. In May, a French army having advanced on its way to Berlin as far as the road between Wittemberg and Torgau, the city, which the king intended to defend, was deemed unsafe; and Schleiermacher sent his wife and children (he had now a daughter of his own, in addition to the step-children) into Silesia to be out of the way. His letters to Henriette give a lively picture of the state of the city during the latter part of May and the greater part of June; at first in hourly expectation of the enemy's appearance; then in anxiety from uncertain rumours of great engagements; and finally, in half disappointment that even the successes of Bülow should have turned the tide another way. In a letter of May 15th he says:

"According to reports current to-day, an engagement is to be expected to-day or to-morrow between Bülow and the French that have crossed the Elbe, which will probably decide the approaching fate of Berlin. But do not be anxious about me, my love. The arrangements for defence will not have attained such forwardness as to enable us to do any thing here; and therefore the militia levies will probably only be called out in order to withdraw from the city. In such case that is what I shall do, and shall come to you quite easily. Only think, this morning I had just set to regularly at a sermon, when this report, which Twesten brought me, obliged me to jump up. Going into the city, I heard that the militia levies were to move out *en masse* to the Templar's Hill in the morning at half-past four. Imagine my horror at finding that I had not yet got any ammunition, and it was Sunday. No notice, however, had yet been received at our sectional office. So I run quickly to the head office, and find there is not a word of truth in the rumoured order. But I will take warning and to-morrow supply myself with the needful, that I may not be put to shame before my comrades" (vol. ii. p. 276).

On the next day but one he writes:

"To-day I have done up the house, paid off the people though keeping them still here, bought powder-flask and canteen, got Röder's green bag mended and packed, and my money changed for gold. My most important papers, your letters and Henriette Herz's packets, I have given to Pischon to keep. The linen and your books are in the cellar. This haste, my love, has been occasioned by unfavourable accounts which were spread this morning early. Bülow, it was said, was

Digitized by Google

under great pressure from superior force, and was in rapid retreat. Tranquillising reports from him have now come in this evening. There is nothing to fear, he believes, for Berlin: and he intends, on receiving reinforcements, to move in advance again and take the offensive. The excitable populace, by help of this report, has got over all difficulties, and it has grown in their hands almost into a victory" (vol. ii. p. 277).

During all this time of excitement Schleiermacher continued,—and he alone,—to give his University lectures, as well as to preach. The danger to the city passed away. The wife, who, after all, had been nearer the actual seat of war, obtained a pass from Scharnhorst and returned: and the correspondence ceased. Of the great events of the autumn and winter,—the battle of Leipzig, the crossing of the Rhine by the allies and the advance into France, there is unfortunately no notice. Indeed, the only grudge we have against Henriette is, that she spoiled Schleiermacher's letter-writing. He is no sooner married than an epistolary dumbness seizes him: and it is only when a journey separates him from Henriette that the post-office ever hears of him again. Nor can we say that even then any thing like the old faculty reappears: the light play of thought and the variegated colours of feeling are gone; and, except in one or two disquisitional letters, the preponderance of household prose becomes great. The period from the peace to his death, on the 12th February 1834, was by far the most important for his influence on the world, the time of his greatest academic activity, of his most scientific productions, of his highest ecclesiastical repute. But precisely of this period these volumes contain only the most meagre memorials, and give us nothing to say. It is well known that the establishment of Hegel and the rising influence of his school threw Schleiermacher painfully into the shade; and the strife of academic factions in Berlin somewhat embittered his latter days. Traces of this are to be found in the latter part of our second volume; and a certain shade of depression steals over us as we read, as if the light were beginning to burn dim and could no longer conquer the chill and sadness of the space around. When Arndt took the half-sister Nanni to wife in 1817, the good Charlotte exchanged Gnadenfrei for Berlin, and succeeded to her place. She died before her brother, in 1831: and of his departure it was left for Henriette to tell the tale;—how worthily of her and of him the following words will show: they were written as a memorial for her children:

"For twelve days your dear father had suffered from much hoarseness and cough, though looking, in spite of great paleness, bright and clear. Uneasy as we were, and much as we begged him to take more care of himself, he put aside all such suggestions with the assurance

Digitized by Google

that he felt perfectly well, that this affection was quite superficial and was of no radical consequence.

Thursday the 6th was the last evening spent in the quiet cheerfulness of the family circle. During Friday night the illness set in with a fearful attack of pains throughout the body (he had had, without mentioning it, a transient one like it the night before), so that your dear father declared he could not say where the pains were, but only that every fibre of him was torn with pain. His look was that of a dying man, and he very distinctly expressed his anticipation of death. I had at once sent for the physician, who found the case very critical, but succeeded in subduing this state after a few hours, so that he lay still and without pain in bed.

On Sunday a consultation was held of four physicians. On that day the inflammation rapidly became extreme in a few hours. He was bled twice within the day: the physicians still gave hope, but in a way which hardly left on the bystanders any doubt how matters really stood. I never left his bed. The children and friends who were within call in the adjacent room executed all commissions: for personal attendance on him I was sufficient; and I was enjoined to preserve the utmost quiet. I kept the injunction so conscientiously as to give no opening for a single precious word.

He often assured me he did not suffer so much as might appear. During the whole illness he was in a mood of clear gentle quietude, of exact compliance with every direction, without a sound of complaint or dissatisfaction,—kindly and patient, though serious and abstracted.

Early on Monday the physician found his pulse and features those of a dying man.

I here set down from memory the few precious words which I have been able to retain. Once he called me to his bedside and said: 'I suppose I am, properly speaking, in a condition oscillating between consciousness and unconsciousness (referring to his having taken opium, and in consequence dozing a good deal); but inwardly I experience the divinest moments; I cannot help thinking the deepest speculative thoughts, and these with me are completely one with the inmost religious feelings.' Once he raised his hand, saying with great solemnity,—'Here I light a flame of sacrifice.' Another time,—'To the children I bequeath the saying of St. John, "Love one another."' Again, another time,—'The good children, what a God's-blessing they are to us!' Again,—'I charge you, greet all my friends, and tell them how deeply I have loved them.' 'How I am enjoying the precious days of our silver wedding,—Hildchen's wedding,—I am quite going over it all here beforehand.' 'I should have been so glad to remain with you and the children.' And when I gave expression to my hope, —'Delude thyself not, dear love' (with the highest fervour), 'there is still much that is hard to understand.' He also desired to see the children; yet on my begging him to avoid every thing agitating, he relinquished the wish, and was satisfied that each should come just once into the room to bring something. Several times he asked who was in the next room: and when I mentioned the names of the dear friends and

Digitized by Google

said, 'They are with the children joining in silent prayer,' it seemed to give him pleasure.

On the last morning his suffering visibly increased. He complained of violent burning within, and the first and last sound of complaint broke from him, 'O Lord, my suffering is great.' The unmistakable features of death set in, the eye was unsteady, the death-struggle was there. He then put the two first fingers on the left eye, as he did when in deep reflection, and began to speak:

'I have never clung to the dead letter, and we have Jesus Christ's reconciling death, his body and his blood. But I have always believed, and I now still believe, that the Lord Jesus gave the Last Supper in water and wine.'*

During this he had raised himself up, his features began to kindle, his voice was clear and strong. He asked with a priestly solemnity, 'Are ye all one with me in this faith, that the Lord Jesus blessed the water also in the wine?'—to which we replied with a loud 'Yes.' 'Thus let us take the Lord's Supper,—you the wine, and I the water,' said he very solemnly; 'but about G.' (the sacristan) 'we must not mind. Quick! quick! let no one scruple about the form.' When what was needful had been fetched,—we meanwhile waiting with him in solemn silence,—he began, in prelude to the act of celebration, to utter some words of prayer, with features transfigured and eyes in which a marvellous brilliancy was reflected on us,—the glow, indeed, of a glorified love as he gazed at us. Then he gave the bread first to me, next to each one else that was there, and lastly he took it himself, uttering aloud in every instance the institutive words, 'Take and eat,' &c.: so loud, indeed, did he speak as to be clearly heard by all the children, who knelt listening at the door of the next room.

In the same way he handed the wine, uttering the institutive words at length; and finally took the water, after again repeating the words to himself as well. Then, 'By these words of Scripture I abide; they are the foundation of my faith.' When he had uttered the blessing, his eyes turned once more in full affection upon me; then, 'In this love and communion we are one and remain one.' He laid himself back upon the pillow. The transfigured look rested on him still. In a few minutes he said: 'Now can I too no longer abide here:' and then, 'Lay me in another position.' We laid him on his side. He drew a few breaths, and life was gone. Meanwhile all the children had come in and knelt round the bed. His eye gradually closed. How inadequate now is even memory to the reality of that tremendous moment!" (vol. ii. p. 482.)

* Wine had been expressly forbidden him. And among the Jews, as among the ancients universally, wine, it is well known, was never used unmixed with water.

Digitized by Google

Art. XI.—PRESENT ASPECTS OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform. By John Stuart Mill.

A Plea for the Constitution. By John Austin.

The customs of publication place us on this occasion in an unusual difficulty. We wish to say something of the state of political circumstances, but even while we are writing those circumstances may change. We are particularly desirous of criticising the Reform Bill which has been proposed by the Government of Lord Derby; but it exactly happens that the fate of that Bill will be determined after the manuscript of this article leaves our hands, and before it can reach the eyes of our readers. While our paper is in the printer's hands, the House of Commons will decide for or against the second reading of the Bill. Few of the minor annoyances of authorship are more irritating. While we are criticising the measure, we are uncertain whether, before it can be read, our criticism may not be deprived of all its interest. If the Bill of Lord Derby should be rejected at the second reading, no one will care to read about its merits or demerits. It is difficult too to write on contemporary politics without making predictions; it is scarcely possible on so shifting a scene not to employ our knowledge of the past and present in anticipating the future. But now we must carefully abstain from so doing; our readers will have the advantage of a few critical days, and it would be folly for us to prophesy facts which they will *know*.

A Conservative Government has some advantages in legislating upon Reform. In the first place, they have peculiar facilities for carrying what they propose. A Liberal Government is in a difficulty. It is a Government, so to say, of Reformers; and whatever it proposes is exposed to the unfriendly criticism of the obstructive portion of the public, of the House of Commons, and of the House of Lords. Any measure Lord John Russell or Lord Palmerston may introduce into the Lower House, will inevitably be distrusted by the Upper House. Until it has actually obtained the assent of the latter, we shall never know whether important provisions may not be struck out, or modified, or counteracted; in the present unexcited state of the public mind any extreme measure would doubtless be rejected by the House of Lords as a whole. A measure proposed by a Prime Minister who is the leader of the Conservative party in the House of Lords, is exempted from this danger. Even, too, in the House of Commons itself there are many persons—many Liberal mem-

Digitized by Google

bers—whose interests are opposed to a reform in the representation. The more searching such a measure of reform may be, the greater will be the parliamentary distaste for it. The members for the nomination boroughs and for the corrupt boroughs will resist their disfranchisement by all fair means, and by many which are scarcely fair. If to the opposition excited by the selfish terrors of threatened interests we are to add the continual hostility of the Conservative party, the success of any measure must be dubious. The parliamentary position of the two parties is therefore singularly contrasted. A Whig proposition on Reform is a suggestion of possibilities; you never know that they will be more than possibilities. A Conservative proposition is an offer of concession from the party disposed to resist; if you think it right to accept that which they offer, you are sure at least that you can have it.

Until recently, moreover, the Conservative party enjoyed the great advantage of being unfettered by previous promises. Almost all Liberal members have on this subject a considerable number of old remembrances. They cannot but recall electioneering engagements, hustings questions—perhaps eloquent speeches of former times. The followers of Lord Derby were free. The utmost which they had undertaken was to consider the subject; they had never given their adhesion to any theory of representative government. The Liberals had uttered, perhaps without realising them, the loose maxims of democratic innovation. The Conservatives had never done so.

On the other hand, however, both these seeming advantages are, at least just now, neutralised by greater disadvantages. Not only had the Conservatives no pledges upon Reform, but they had no principles. A writer of conjectural history would find a pleasant subject in the possible deliberations of Lord Derby's cabinet. What vague things did not Mr. Disraeli propose! what minute things did not Mr. Henley object to! what happy jests had the Premier at every suggestion! We know that they had not concluded their deliberations till late in January; the principle of the Bill was an open question till that time. Some of our contemporaries have been scandalised at their tardiness; but we are rather astonished at their promptitude. Knowing how infinite the subject is, we appreciate the difficulty of inducing a cabinet of undefined opinions to agree upon it. Seriously, it is evident that legislation on a complicated half-understood subject demands a mature judgment and the anxious consideration of many years. To these the Conservatives can make no pretension; their reflections on Reform commenced but recently, and their conclusions cannot have been sanctioned by time.

Digitized by Google

Again, the state of the Reform question bears no analogy to that of the many other questions on which the Conservative party have been very useful in carrying measures which they had prevented others from carrying. Every one knows that the Jew Bill in very recent times, the Corn Act of 1846, Catholic Emancipation, were obtained in this manner. But on all these questions the state of national opinion was very simple. The public mind had conclusively decided on a definite proposition. The opinion of the nation had been instructed by years of searching discussion. The trial was over, and judgment had been given. The opinion of the nation on these points was strong, and it was *definite*. Far different, as we know, is the state of the Reform question. There is an agreement among statesmen that there shall be some Reform; the House of Commons is deeply pledged to take care that there shall be some; but there is no agreement what that reform shall be. The ends to be aimed at are as yet only beginning to be clear; the modes of realising those ends are still vaguely conceived, and have scarcely been discussed. A government which undertakes to propose a measure on a topic on which public opinion is so indefinite, undertakes a task of creation. It is for them by profound thought to shape vague principles into a distinct expression; it is for them by careful consideration to discover fitting machinery for embodying those principles. They must define the wishes of the public; they must clothe them in appropriate detail. On many points of the Reform question they might justly assume to go beyond the public mind; much that is unknown to the nation at large may be thoroughly known to them; the experience of parliamentary statesmen must give them a peculiar claim to be deferred to on the constitution of Parliament; those who have actually to prepare a measure on a subject so ramified will have to reject many general views which are at first sight plausible, and will discover the worthlessness of many expedients which at first sight seem excellent. Constructive legislation is always difficult, and it is rarely more difficult than on this subject. The problem of representative government is as yet only half solved; no nation has shown the world more than a very imperfect approximation to it. As soon as we see that such is the position of the question, its unsuitability to a government like Lord Derby's becomes apparent. A Conservative government cannot be expected to define principles which it disbelieves: it cannot shape ideas with which it does not sympathise: it cannot express notions which it but half comprehends. A Conservative government, as such, wishes to keep our fundamental institutions as they are; it cannot organise profound projects of fundamental innovation. Reformers may discover what reforms are expedient; it is their legitimate

Digitized by Google

task and characteristic function. The duty of the Conservative party is a duty of vigilance; their task is a task of criticism. They must watch that no false principle creeps into our legislation; that no fallacious arguments are left unanswered; that no expedients are selected which are inappropriate to the contemplated ends. No one can deny the necessity of such a labour; no thoughtful mind will make light of its difficulty, or depreciate its value. But on the very face it is the exact antithesis to a labour of construction; Conservative criticism is the obvious opposite to innovating creation. The Tory party may register the edicts of settled opinion, especially they may repeal existing statutes, for that requires no effort of creative mind; but we must not expect from them any original measures of comprehensive Reform; we must not ask the drag-chain of our constitution to begin to pull the wheels.

The complexity, moreover, of a subject like Parliamentary Reform especially demands that we should be sure of the *bona fides* of those who deal with it. The subject is naturally large; the moment we try to touch it with a practical object it runs into ramified detail. Nor in our case is this the worst. We are not legislating on a *tabula rasa*. The representative system of the country is an old, involved, puzzling machine. When a person proposes to touch it, we like to know from him exactly what he is wishing to do with it. We can only know this by what he tells us; and we therefore like to be sure that his avowed objects are his real objects. The Liberal party have at least a presumption in their favour. Missionaries are commonly sincere. Men rarely devote themselves to the pursuit of ends which they do not desire. At any rate, sincerity is more frequent among those who bear the burden and heat of the day than among those who enter into their labours. Recent converts are always distrusted. If confidence, according to the saying, is "of slow growth," the Conservatives must not expect it for their proposals of Reform. They may ask our attention; but they must expect our scrutiny.

If we consider the Bill which Lord Derby's Government has in fact proposed, it will seem to be a commentary on these remarks. In the first place, the measure has no defined object. There is no evidence that those who framed it did so with distinct principles in their minds: they had formed no clear notion of the present deficiencies in our representative system, and consequently they could not even apply their minds to the consideration of the best mode of amending those deficiencies. What will be agreeable to the House of Commons? what will Liberal members accept? what will country gentlemen endure? These were evidently the questions most prominent in the minds of those who drew the Bill. A Sybarite described a certain amusement

Digitized by Google

as "the next best thing to doing nothing." We should have expected that this would be the motto of a Conservative Reform Bill, and so we find it to be.

We showed in our last Number that there were four objects which a scheme of Reform should now be prepared to effect. 1. It should provide for the working classes an authorised mode of expressing their views and opinions, without intrusting them with the entire government of the country; it should give them, in a word, *some* members of Parliament, but not all the members. 2. It should abolish those boroughs which are notoriously corrupt or notoriously dependent. 3. It should endeavour to diminish the uniform character of the county constituencies, and in consequence, the sectarian character of county members. And lastly, it should give an additional voice in the legislature to those interests in the country which have grown rapidly since 1832. The first of these objects the measure of Lord Derby's Government did not propose to accomplish at all; the framers had not grasped the idea on which its utility depends. The provisions which they suggested for enfranchising the working classes, whatever may be their intrinsic value, have an entirely different scope. There are different estimates of the number of persons who would be newly enfranchised by a 60*l.* savings-bank qualification. Sir Benjamin Hall proved, at least to his own satisfaction, that it would give a vote only to one person who did not already possess it in so large a town as Newport in Wales; others have conjectured that it would give votes to a fair number of such persons; but no one has attempted to show that it would give them the command of a single *constituency*. Its effect might be to grant the operatives a slight diffused influence in many constituencies; but it would not—it has never been contended that it would—grant them a representative. Lord Derby's measure, as a whole, showed no comprehension of the idea that the principle of class representation—the very principle on which he opposes democracy — involves the distinct representation of the most numerous class in the nation. Nor did the Conservative Bill even profess to aim at effecting our second object. It avowedly left the nomination boroughs and the corrupt boroughs very much as they stood. It withdrew a single member from some small boroughs which possess two; but upon what principle it did so was very indistinctly explained. Mr. Disraeli defended the small boroughs, in part upon very just grounds, though he impaired their correctness by characteristic exaggeration. But why the unfortunate places which return two members should be despoiled in preference to those which return one, he did not inform us. He gave an elaborate panegyric on them; he proved that they were good constituencies, and that they

Digitized by Google

returned the best members to Parliament who were returned by any kind of places; and then he proposed to take members from them. The notion of the Conservative Cabinet was one which may be observed in the more moderate Socialist writers,—the notion of mitigated confiscation. They think that, after all, it is not much harm to take a little from those who have a great deal. As these constituencies seemed rich in members, Mr. Disraeli proposed to take some from them; although he maintained that they elected excellent persons, and although, to balance the periods of an artificial rhetoric, he overstated their constitutional utility. Scrupulous consistency is not his *forte*. He diminished the elements he thought beneficial; but he retained the corrupt boroughs although corrupt, and the dependent boroughs although dependent.

The third and fourth objects which we specified were the only ones which the Conservative measure even aimed at accomplishing. It gave members to some large constituencies which have grown up entirely, or have much augmented, since the Reform Act of 1832; and so far there is nothing whatever to object to. We all admit that in some degree this is desirable. Lord Derby also proposed to liberalise the county constituencies by adopting the 10*l.* occupation franchise; but he wished to mitigate its efficiency by an equivalent. We will not weary our readers by dwelling on the topic, which will be peculiarly tedious to them at the moment they will read these lines. They will just have heard more than they wish of 40*s.* freeholders in boroughs and in counties. All that we need observe is, that Lord Derby impaired the effect of the most important provisions in his Bill by excluding from the counties an element which tends at present to liberalise them, and by introducing into the boroughs an element which possibly might augment the power of the territorial interest.

As the Conservative measure does not endeavour to effect our first two objects, and only professes to strengthen the Liberal element where we have shown that it needs strengthening at the heavy price of a counterbalancing equivalent, it is not unnatural that we should hope that Lord Derby will be unsuccessful.

Such, indeed, is both our hope and our anticipation. In addition to the defects of detail that are apparent in the Conservative measure, there is an objection of principle to it. We should have been much puzzled three months ago to conjecture what the precise provisions of Lord Derby's proposition would be; but we should have had great confidence on one point,—we should have thought we could predict in one respect that which they would *not be*. Mr. Bright made an oratorical tour to convince the public that uniformity in a representative system was an obvious advantage, and non-uniformity an obvious disadvantage.

Digitized by Google

Whatever temporary concessions Mr. Bright may make to existing institutions, he would not deny that his principle is one of equality, that all persons who have votes any where should have them every where, and that all constituencies should be equalised so that a vote should as far as possible have every where the same value. The Radical principle is an identity of franchise. We should have expected that Lord Derby, who, according to his boast, and according to the traditional *arcana* of his party, desires to "stem the tide of democracy," would have denied this principle in theory, and would not have tried to extend it in practice. For such a policy he would have had unanswerable grounds of argument, and tempting grounds of Conservative precedent. The notion of uniformity dates from 1832, and it is a Whig notion. Lord Derby may have personal recollections of that time which may attach him to it, but his party have only a tradition of antipathy to it. A criticism on the machinery of the Act of 1832 would have come with natural propriety from the constitutional representatives of those who opposed it. On the contrary, however, the Conservative party, under the guidance of leaders whose parliamentary abilities far exceed their legislative judgment, have endeavoured to extend the principle of identity. An unflinching democrat, if there be such a person in this country, could not but smile at the concession of a principle which inevitably leads to the deduction he desires. Mr. Disraeli confesses it to be absurd that a 10*l.* occupier in one place should not have a vote, and that a 10*l.* occupier in another place should have a vote. "The mental qualifications of the two," he would say, "are presumably the same. I agree with you, they should have the same amount of power." Mr. Bright inevitably replies, that if that be the case, the two ought to have an equal share in the return of their respective representatives. They *cannot* otherwise have the same power. Is this true of a voter for Tavistock and a voter for Manchester, of a voter for Maldon and a voter for the West Riding of Yorkshire? The only answer to the Radical arguments which is tenable in theory, or which dictates effectual arrangements in practice,—whatever form it may take in statement,—whatever complexities it may suggest for possible institutions, ultimately resolves itself into a plea for electoral dissimilarities; and this in two ways. If you wish all classes to be represented in the legislature, you must not permit all the members of the legislature to be elected by a uniform process. *A variety of representation involves a variety of constituencies.* From similar trees we shall have similar fruits. Again, if the more educated class is to preponderate in the legislature, it must also preponderate in *most* electoral bodies; if the less educated class is to have an authorised representation

Digitized by Google

at all, it must preponderate in a few. The majority of constituencies ought to be contrasted with the minority. Uniformity *per se* is therefore a conclusive objection to a representative organisation. Why should A, it is asked, have a vote here for a 10*l.* occupation qualification, and B not have it there? why should C have great influence because he votes in a small borough with 200 electors, and D but little because he votes in a swarming borough with 5000? *We* reply, because by dissimilar groups of electors dissimilar persons will be elected, and because it is essential that dissimilar persons should be chosen in a heterogeneous and complicated country. The Conservatives, as a party, have now thrown away this kind of argument. Lord Stanley, indeed, attempted to defend the principle of uniformity on a technical ground. He told us that we should doubtless hereafter have to disfranchise many small boroughs; he seemed to confess that he would do so now if he had a parliamentary majority sufficient for the task; and that, in the event of a proposal for such an abolition, a uniform qualification would be a facility. If the qualification for the franchise were the same both in boroughs and counties, a disfranchised borough might be thrown into the adjacent county, and no one would lose his vote by the change; we should escape the popular objection to personal disfranchisement. But it is evident that the argument is unsound in two ways. *First*, under the most contracted system of franchise, the rights of existing electors in disfranchised boroughs might be transferred to the neighbouring counties (both in the Bill of Lord Derby and the Act of 1832 there are similar saving clauses for existing voters); and *secondly*, though no vote would be taken away by the annexation of borough to county, the electoral power of the borough voter would be almost destroyed. Before they alone elected one or perhaps two members; their voice was final: afterwards they will only have an infinitesimal share in the election of a county member; their votes will be lost in a crowd. It is both singular and unfortunate that the Conservative party should have surrendered a tenable principle, and relied on an untenable technicality.

We are aware that there is an attempt to establish a distinction between identity of franchise qualification in different places and identity in the numerical composition of the constituent bodies. But both have, in fact, the same grounds of defence and the same grounds of objection. There is an appearance of fairness in favour of both; there is the inevitable effect of a monotonous composition of the legislature to be alleged against both. Mr. Bright will do concise execution on the refinements of those who would establish a distinction. We scarcely expected the Conservative party to be bold enough to

Digitized by Google

propose the creation of new inequalities; but we certainly could not have anticipated that they should be so blind to their true position, so unalive to their constitutional duties, as to propose to diminish those which exist.

We should be disposed to conclude the discussion of the measure of Lord Derby at this point, if it were not that one of the principal points of it which we deem objectionable has been defended by persons whose arguments are entitled to much attention. We know that a considerable number of moderate Liberals regard the existence of the nomination boroughs which remain, and even of the corrupt boroughs also, as important for constitutional reasons. And as we think this opinion to be not only erroneous in itself, but to be founded on an entirely mistaken view of the present and future working of the constitution of the country, we gladly seize an opportunity for its discussion.

The principal allegation in favour of such boroughs is, that their existence tends to augment the strength of the executive government. Before the Reform Act of 1832 we are told they had such an effect; as their number was lessened by that Act, their influence was diminished; but to a considerable extent they continue to produce the same effect. If we further diminish the number of such boroughs, we must expect that the influence of the administrative government, which has for some years been less than is desirable, will in consequence be even further impaired.

We will first deal with the case of nomination boroughs, and afterwards with that of the purchasable boroughs. It is evident that proprietary constituencies, as we may call them, can only tend to strengthen the executive government when the great majority of the proprietors are united, and when they choose to support the government. If the proprietors are divided in opinion, if one half aid the administration and the other half the opposition, their existence is in this respect of no avail. Now what is the security at the present time that the owners of constituencies will be united? Other educated men are often divided in opinion; why should not they be divided also? As a fact, they are not united. In the present Parliament a Liberal sits for Calne, for Morpeth, and for Tavistock; two Liberals sit for Malton; but, on the other hand, two Conservatives sit for Stamford, a Conservative sits for Midhurst, and another for Woodstock. Even supposing the accusation first made by Mr. Croker, and repeated very often since, were proved,—even if it were proved that in 1832 the Whigs spared the close boroughs of their party, and disfranchised those of their opponents,—yet a temporary cause of this sort could not produce permanent effects. In a generation or two the politics of the proprietors of the boroughs

Digitized by Google

preserved would in all likelihood be different from one another and from those of their fathers. They would be divided in opinion as much as any other persons of the same rank and the same station.

In the last century, it is true, the borough proprietors were often united; and it is instructive to call to mind why they were so. In the early part of the eighteenth century the immense preponderance of parliamentary property adhered to the parliamentary settlement of the Crown: the great Whig families gave an energetic support to the House of Hanover, and the less powerful owners of seats did so also. The nation generally was in their favour; and the proprietors of boroughs shared in the prevailing opinion. Parliamentary property was naturally inclined to support a dynasty which *must* rule by means of Parliament than under one which might rule without it. When these feelings died away, there was very great difficulty in procuring the requisite union of parliamentary proprietors. The nation had no strong political opinion; and in consequence the owners of influence were subject to no natural attraction of cohesion. An artificial one had therefore to be provided. We laugh at the very names of the old sinecures; the Comptroller of the Pipe, the Board of Green Cloth, the Clerk of the Estreats. If a man wishes for amusing and yet not uninstructive reading, let him peruse Horace Walpole's memorandum respecting his income. We smile as if we were wiser than our fathers, as if these places without duties had no utility. They had, however, the greatest. These sinecures were the purchase-money of power. The dispenser of patronage had then in his gift a large number of lucrative situations, which could be filled by any one, however stupid, and conferred on any one, however obscure. By means of this currency of offices he was able to induce—moralists say to bribe—the owners of boroughs to support him. During the quiet years in the middle of the eighteenth century, much of the strength of the executive government was thus obtained. It afterwards ceased to be needed. When the French Revolution broke out, popular feeling revived: the English nation was united by the fear of democracy and the spirit of war, and the borough-owners were unanimous as well as others. In the end as well as in the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a legitimate bond of union among the possessors of influence; in the middle of the century there was only a corrupt one. We see from facts what theory might have prophecied to us, that nominative constituencies will only be arrayed in support of the government when the government has a sufficient equivalent to offer to the nominators, or when a strong national feeling combines the latter, as well as other persons, into energetic cohesion.

Digitized by Google

Now what likelihood is there that the first of these conditions will ever again exist in this country? The times of sinecure patronage are at an end, if any times are so. Only the other day the Lord-Chancellor could not appoint his son-in-law to a laborious post for which he was apparently well qualified, merely because there had been in legal circles a half-expressed understanding that the person selected for that post should be in actual practice at the bar. The effect has been to place the lunatics under the not unappropriate tutelage of Mr. Samuel Warren; and as we are in our senses, we do not quarrel with the result. We cite it to show how weak the power of patronage has become; it proves that strong interest and apparent competency will not prevail over a technical objection. How idle is it to suppose that in a country such as this a government will ever again be able to purchase the general support of many borough-proprietors! Moreover, a more general remark may be made. We may safely lay down that patronage-influence must considerably preponderate over popular influence, or the latter will soon altogether destroy the former. How unpopular every kind of patronage is we have lately seen, in the popular inclination in favour of conferring government appointments by competitive examination. The faith in examinations does not go deep into the English mind; but the hatred to jobbing does. When the machinery of borough-influence is distinctly presented to a nation, the antipathy it excites is certain to secure its abolition. People call it corruption, and the instincts of mankind are against it.

Borough-owners, therefore, will only be united when other people are united; and then of what use are they? When there is a strong popular feeling, popular constituencies will be unanimous. *Then* we do not need the combination of nomination-members, and in no one other case shall we obtain it. Even if the system of competitive examination were abandoned, the result would not in this respect be material. You cannot purchase the support of noble and wealthy borough-proprietors by petty places in the Customs and the Stamps. You require some offices of magnitude, which will suit their friends, family, and connections,—posts with large incomes and few duties; something like the ancient sinecures of many hundreds—not unfrequently thousands—per annum. These exist no longer; and if it be said that they are necessary to the existence of a popular government, we answer, that no government in which the popular element preponderates will ever endure them.

It is also alleged in behalf of nomination-boroughs that they give a means of introducing young men of ability into Parliament, who are often useful in subordinate official positions and sometimes become great statesmen. But this can only be

Digitized by Google

so when borough-proprietors have seats to spare; in the "good old times" this was the case, but nowadays how very rarely is such a use made of these constituencies! The nomination-boroughs, as we may satisfy ourselves by looking at the list of representatives for them, are almost monopolised by the personal connections of their proprietors.

Some of these remarks apply to the purchasable boroughs, but not perhaps all of them. These may in some measure tend to give strength to an administration. Probably we are trenching on the delicate mysteries of Sir William Hayter. We shall retain much patronage which is suitable to the wishes of influential constituents; we have still excisemen's places and custom-house places in moderate abundance. We have even adapted the competitive system to the wants of such persons; we give them the right of nominating the candidates, though we allow presumptive merit to decide which candidate shall fill the post. Such places are asked for more or less by most members of Parliament; but they are naturally most desired by the members for very small constituencies, where every vote is of great consequence, and where most of the voters have, through long temptation, become corruptible. The representatives of such boroughs, therefore, are naturally disposed, in the absence of better reasons, to support the Government. They will not desert their party; the local interests by which they were elected would not endure that; public decency, and perhaps conviction, forbid it; but when their party is in power they will support it if they can. Many of the members for purchasable boroughs, moreover, are old men of business, who have made much money, but who have no social position, and who get into Parliament to obtain one. Such persons are naturally much influenced by the social favours of which a discerning government is commonly lavish, and a dispirited opposition commonly sparing. So long as the aristocratic element is powerful in the composition of our cabinets, this social corruption will have daily and perceptible influence. The "snob in Parliament" is a subject we commend to Mr. Thackeray.

Although, therefore, we believe the general effect of the corrupt constituencies to be far more pernicious than that of the nomination-boroughs, we are constrained to admit that, in the particular quality for which the two are frequently praised, the former have the advantage. It will be evident, however, that some of the inducements we have mentioned will operate to a considerable extent on the members of all constituencies; there will always be some gravitation towards the dispenser of patronage, and it is not right to strengthen the inevitable tendency at the expense of demoralising small country towns by bribery and corruption.

Digitized by Google

But the real answer to all such arguments in the present day is a more generous as well as a more satisfactory one. We have drifted quite away from the system of the eighteenth century. We have suffered, as our ancestors suffered a century ago, from the dearth of political questions. There is now the same tendency as then to factious divisions, to selfish schisms, to feebleness in the executive. But our remedy is different. We can no longer, if we would, guide bad dispositions by bad motives; it is not for us to meet corruptibility with corruption. Nor do we require to do so. We have a political agent which our ancestors had not; we must bring public opinion to bear upon the topic. We must compel members of Parliament to support the best government which can from time to time be attained against factious opposition, against insidious motions, in spite of casual discrepancies of opinion, in spite of errors of detail. When we have had a sufficient trial of weak governments, we shall learn the advantage of strong ones. And ample experience shows that if the *nation* can be brought to think so, members of Parliament will think so also. So far from the walls of the legislature being too impervious to public opinion, they scarcely exclude the clamour of the hour. In this point of view, purchasable boroughs are a considerable disadvantage, and nomination-boroughs are a very great one. The effective check of public opinion is the check of the constituencies. Their voice will be heard in Parliament when no other voice can be heard there. But a borough proprietor is the constituency; you have no check upon him: public opinion has no means of reaching him; he will "do what he will with his own." The moral control of a purchased constituency likewise cannot be very powerful. If we examine the matter closely, we find that the dependent boroughs, and the corrupt boroughs also, to some extent weaken the regulating effect of national conviction, on which we must depend in future as the constitutional provision for strengthening our executive.

Not only are these exceptional boroughs disadvantageous in the exact mode in which they are alleged to be beneficial, but they have a dangerous result of peculiar importance at this moment. Their indefensible qualities bring disgrace on the small boroughs generally. When Mr. Bright wishes to cast reproach on the lesser constituencies, his uniform method is to indicate an instance in which Lord A. is all-powerful, or in which money is omnipotent. As was shown most evidently in 1832, the instincts of the English people are strongly opposed to sham elections by unreal electoral bodies. Neither Old Sarum nor Arundel will ever be agreeable to them. Their instincts detest all that is fictitious. Accordingly, Mr. Bright's reproaches carry his audi-

Digitized by Google

ence with him; and they forget to call to mind that many minor constituencies are independent of all proprietors, and have, where they are not too small, preserved during many years a remarkable incorruptibility. Few persons, indeed, until recently were alive to the constitutional importance of our smaller constituencies; and even now their exact position, the exact mode of their utility, will bear a short exposition.

S. T. Coleridge is perhaps entitled more than any one else to the merit of the first distinct explanation of the true theory of representative government. We do not like to venture on a universal negative, but we believe that, before the publication of his *Church and State*, the general doctrine of Class Representation was never very clearly expressed. The great influence of that remarkable book, however, soon diffused it among a large number of disciples.

But the followers of Coleridge, and probably Coleridge himself, had a very imperfect view of the mode in which it is fitting to attain the results which he desired. A notion lurks in their speculations that it is possible for a provident legislator to measure the social influence of particular interests, and to apportion to them an exact *quantum* of corresponding representation. They believed that it was possible to compose a satisfactory legislature of class representatives only, and to insure the perfect working of that legislature by a proportionate allotment of members to classes. Their Parliament would have contained, "weaving class, five members; shipping interest, nine members; landed interest, twenty-seven members; and so on:" but they forgot to inform us what measure there was of the comparative influence of different interests, and how the precise apportionment of the respective representatives was to be made. Probably they would have admitted that they could not make it: they would have said that governments, especially constitutional "governments, are not made, but grow:" they would have expected the due adjustment to arise, not from the sudden *fiat* of a legislator, but from the gradual operation of a tentative experience. But if we consult history and see what has been actually achieved, we find that the course of experience has been different. There has never been in this country such a precise adjustment. The substantial preponderance in our legislature has for very many years been given to what cannot with any propriety be called a class or an interest,—to the general body of educated men, who have no special desires, no special prejudices—the mental mark of no peculiar calling. In some degree all classes contribute to this unclassifiable aggregate. In an assembly of bankers there will be the prejudices of bankers; merchants assembled together will have mercantile prejudices; hop-dealers, hop-prejudices: but

Digitized by Google

thrown with one another, involved in the general intercourse of society, they cease to have these prejudices. What commonly happens in youth, sometimes recurs in manhood. Each school has its prejudices, its petty feeling, its peculiar style of training, its course of reading, its set of questions; to its pupils these are all in all. But in after years the University teaches a different lesson: the narrow views of each mode of training are put off, modes of reading are compared, subjects which were neglected assume their due value in comparison with those which were cultivated. Similarly, many men in after life go away from the special littlenesses of their trades and professions into the great university of the world; they see its spectacle, they learn its teaching; to an excessive degree, perhaps, they think its thoughts. A proper system of representation gives the preponderance in Parliament to men of this kind. We are not saying that such a system should give a decisive influence to men of elaborate cultivation or recondite views; on the contrary, whatever is to rule in it must be plain, and simple, and tangible. All free governments live by popular discussion, and nothing will succeed in them which is not intelligible to ordinary men without extraordinary study. We are but maintaining that the ordinary, the average intelligence which rules in England is, the ordinary intelligence *minus* class-prejudices. The world has an influence far more diffused than what we call cultivation: it rubs off prejudices from those whom it leaves unrefined. It would be wearisome to observe how omnipotently this average neutral intelligence is represented in the press, in literature, in society: clever men pass their lives in laughing at it, and in obeying it. What we call public opinion is in fact the opinion of these moderately intelligent, moderately instructed persons, purged of class-prejudices, purified from casual interests. We showed on a recent occasion at length how completely the opinion of Parliament is in accordance with this ordinary and average opinion. The accordance is mainly preserved by the existence of the small boroughs, which are tolerably independent and tolerably uncorrupt. No exact distribution of members to classes has ever been made, nor is such an attempt suitable to the plain and rough practicality of this country. But what is possible has been done. An immense provision has been made of constituencies without definite character, without characteristic prejudice. The members for these are infinitely various; but they are alike—a few singular cases excepted—in possessing the average intelligence we have described. Care has been taken to give a due voice, a due means of expression, to every class and every interest (save one); but a critical and impartial audience has been provided for all these voices. Such has been the happy result of ages

Digitized by Google

of experience. We object to nomination-boroughs, and to petty purchasable boroughs, because they bring reproach upon this remarkable mechanism; and we object to Lord Derby's Bill because it carefully preserves these unpopular unrealities.

But, we shall be asked, if we wish Lord Derby's Bill to fail, do we imagine that there is any chance of a Bill that is better? We have stated the objects which we wish to see attained. Is it likely that a new measure introduced by a new administration, or a new edition of Lord Derby's Bill so altered and amended as to be substantially a new work, would accomplish these objects, or would even endeavour to accomplish them? Before answering this question we must take the liberty of making a few general observations.

In the first place, the recent debates on the Reform Bill show that the legislative mind, if we may use such an expression, has made great progress on the subject. In former times the subject was one of factious passion, of party struggle, and confusing agitation. We do not say that these elements have ceased to operate even now; far from it, we know that their influence has been exceedingly powerful; and we believe that so long as England is a free country constitutional questions will, as a rule, excite more disturbing passions than other questions. But if we refer to any previous constitutional debate, we shall hardly find there so much of candour, of sincere speaking, of attentive thought, as we have recently observed in the debate on the resolution of Lord John Russell.

We are aware that this opinion will not meet with universal assent. We have read some, and have heard very much, criticism on the speeches of individual statesmen, and on the general tone of the late discussion, of which the tendency is quite the reverse. The more thoughtful politicians of private life are especially disposed to speak thus. Nothing has been said on the recent debate which is new to them: there is scarcely a remark in all the speeches that have been delivered which persons familiar with the subject have not heard a thousand times; which does not, even when true, tease them by its familiarity. Such persons are naturally impatient with a discussion which enlightens them on nothing, and which at the best only reiterates what they know. They are angry at its commonplaceness, and will not be cheerful because of the multitude of its errors.

The mistake of such persons is a general one. It is wrong on a great question like the present to expect original speculation from parliamentary statesmen. Two causes concur to make it unlikely that we should ever obtain it from them. In the first place, a statesman in such government is powerful only in so far *as he is agreed with*. He requires to have a party at

Digitized by Google

his back. He is bound by the traditions and the convictions of that party. He is limited by their obtuseness, and hampered by their sluggishness. He can only lead whither he will be followed. The more fundamental the question under discussion, the more is this the case. On isolated questions, on casual questions, on temporary questions,—on a war with China, on a treaty with Japan,—a statesman may hope to carry his followers along with him. His opinion may be deferred to: his judgment may alter their judgment. On such topics, in fact, the privates of every political party scarcely *have* an opinion. They follow their general. But with what we may call *chronic* questions of constitutional policy, this absolute surrender of individual judgment is not possible. Each party in the state has every now and then to consider it; has a fixed notion about it, fixed antipathies respecting it, a traditional mode of dealing with it. No leader can change these altogether: in the most extreme cases he can only modify them a little. Nothing proves this so conclusively as the history of the periods when the leaders of the House of Commons had the greatest power. Mr. Pitt was omnipotent, or nearly so, for many purposes—on subsidies, and armaments, and expeditions—on all the topics of detail his majority was irresistible and secure. But on Parliamentary Reform, on Catholic Emancipation, even upon the abolition of the Slave Trade, he was powerless. Even in the times of strict party organisation, the controlling power of a leader on constitutional points was very limited. If he ventured to be *original* on permanent questions of evident interest, his strength departed from him. Of course this tendency is much augmented now that the days of despotic leadership are passed away. Satirists say that this is a "half-thinking" age: it reflects a little on every question, and will not reflect more than a little upon any. Whatever may be the general truth of their observation, it has a parliamentary truth. Almost all the members of every party have some little notions on all questions; they have heard about them more or less, have considered them more or less, and have more or less fixed opinions about them: in consequence they will only obey a leader who, to a certain extent, coincides, or affects to coincide, with these opinions. He may be a little original in putting them together, in maturing clauses, in polishing detail; but this is all. Perhaps on no subject does a parliamentary leader meet so firm a phalanx of opposed opinion as the usually despotic leaders encountered on certain particular questions. There is scarcely such a prejudice on any practical question now as resisted the known wishes of both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox on Catholic Emancipation. On every subject, probably, a leader has some influence; but on none is

Digitized by Google

that influence very great. If he ventures to step beyond the charmed circle of acceptable plausibilities, the magic of his power ceases. This consideration alone would prevent our expecting any suggestion from parliamentary statesmen which was in itself new. Nothing is, or ever will seem, plausible to the mass of men except that with which they are familiar. New truth is in their eyes almost a contradiction in terms. Ideas must seem old before they will seem true.

Nor, secondly, is the inevitable life of parliamentary statesmen such as to cultivate the habit of intellectual originality. They are men of the world, and the world teaches caution. They are men of business, and all men of business hesitate at ingenious novelties. Moreover no man now rises to be a leading statesman, except under very peculiar circumstances, without a very long training in subordinate office. The greatest man must now begin the regular way and continue in the regular way. He will scarcely otherwise acquire the needful knowledge, and he will never otherwise acquire the reputation for knowledge. Habits of office are as essential to a parliamentary statesman as to a bureaucratic statesman: perhaps they are even more so. And no official habit is so necessary in a representative government as the habit of voting for the opinion of others. A lord of the treasury has not only, according to Mr. Canning's phrase, to cheer the ministers, but he has to vote for ministers. He must not only make a house, but endeavour to make a majority. Of course a subordinate official has, and can have, but an infinitesimal influence on the measures which are adopted. He is not first in his own department, and he only hears floating gossip about the other departments. The substantial policy of the administration is fixed by the cabinet; and his utmost hope is to be a member of the cabinet in ten years. In the mean time he resigns his independence of opinion and votes as he is enjoined. We do not say that subordinate official men often vote against their opinion. We do not believe it. There is a special provision of nature to preserve them from it. As they know that they will have to vote for what the cabinet decides upon, they abstain from thinking until the cabinet *has* decided;—and then there is little difficulty. A practised advocate learns to believe in his brief. A subordinate statesman in a popular government soon accepts the measures of his party. The pressure of circumstances is far greater upon him than upon the advocate, and the insensible bias is the same. No mode of life can be conceived more unfavourable to originality of thought.

As, therefore, from their peculiar circumstances, parliamentary statesmen are far less likely to originate new ideas, and are moreover disinclined to announce the new ideas which they have,

Digitized by Google

we must not be surprised if the debates of the House of Commons are barren of them. On such a subject as Parliamentary Reform we must be grateful for the truths which are spoken in Parliament. We must not be disheartened if many truths are as yet unspoken there.

Bearing in mind these important considerations, we think the tone of the recent debate an indication of improvement and a ground for hope. Several points of the greatest importance have been recognised by all, or almost all, of our public men; and some of these have never been so recognised before. We will hastily run over the list of these truths. 1st. It has been distinctly recognised, *altogether for the first time*, that the working classes have a claim to some power in the state, but have no claim to monopolise all the power. A cynical observer would perhaps accuse some speakers of affecting a regard for these classes which it is scarcely possible that they should feel. There has been a sudden competition between Liberals and Conservatives for the fame and profit of first recognising the rights of labour, and in consequence their recognition has been complete. In certain states of the public mind this competition might have been dangerous. There would have been a risk that the claims of the lower orders would have been exaggerated. So long as the principles of democracy were but little known to the middle classes in this country, this danger was formidable. The hasty zeal of Mr. Bright has, however, removed this difficulty; he has popularised the principles of democracy, and, if we may be pardoned for the phrase, has made them unpopular. So clearly has the voice of the nation spoken on this point, that no statesman has ventured, Sir James Graham perhaps excepted, on an adhesion to them. The recognition of the rights of the working classes has been general, and it has been warm; but it has also been duly limited.

We are aware of what those who view the recent deliberations of Parliament less favourably than we do, will on this point object. They will say that the difficulty which every body knows has been stated in Parliament; and that nothing has been done, or seriously attempted, towards the solution of that difficulty. Have we not, they will say, heard *ad nauseam* for months past that the lower orders are to have a share in the representation, but not all the representation? The question is, *how* the one is to be given them without giving them the other likewise; and on this point no statesman has thrown any light. We reply, that a representative government is, from the causes we have stated, a slowly moving machine. We have never before had an agreement among our statesmen on the nature of the problem; we now have this. In a little while we may have a satisfactory discussion on the mode of solving it.

Digitized by Google

Some indistinctness, we must however allow, still lurks about the ideas of several statesmen on one part of the subject. They appear to think that it is sufficient to give votes to the working classes, or to some of them. They do not perceive that this is useless to them, *as a class*, unless you give them some members also. This indistinctness is especially apparent on the Conservative side of the House, and we fear that the convenience of the leaders of the party was in part the cause of it. From the nature of the proposal which the Government of Lord Derby had to defend, it was not convenient to make this precise point too clear. None of the franchises which they had proposed could be relied on for giving parliamentary representatives to the working classes, and it was not therefore advisable to state that the object of the whole proceeding was to give them such representatives.

In truth, the difficulty of solving the problem is much increased by the mode in which the Government of Lord Derby seem to have considered it. They endeavoured to *select* from among the working classes the best electors that could be found there: they wished to give votes to the few *élite*, but not to the general body. And nothing can be objected to this aim, *if* our object is to improve the general constituency of the nation. *If* we believe that there are certain of the working classes so well instructed, so independent, so interested in politics, as to be good electors, wherever they may be found, we shall be right in giving them votes in all constituencies, and as such. But we shall not at all attain thereby the precise mode of expressing the sentiments of the entire class of operatives. The *élite* are almost by definition few: they live, for the most part, in towns where the middle classes are very numerous; they are scattered through all those towns. They are in consequence not numerous enough to be the preponderant element even in a single constituency. Besides, as we have had occasion to remark before, what are called the *élite* of a class are commonly those who are just beginning to rise above it. They are apt, in consequence, to look down on their own class. They are probably disposed to relinquish many notions which they formerly accepted. Though in intelligence and in property they are the highest of the class, they are perhaps the least *characteristic* portion of it. The principle of selection which Lord Derby's Government adopted, therefore, fails in two ways: because the electors selected are too few to ensure the election of the members they would wish; and because these electors would by no means always wish for the same members as most of their class.

On this point the Liberal party have shown a far greater distinctness of view than the Conservative party. Opposition reaches

Digitized by Google

with great accuracy the errors of the Government. It is the advantage of a constitutional government that the less one party in the state see any part of the truth, the more their opponents look at it,—the more, too, they speak of it. On the Liberal side of the House it was attempted to prove that the contemplated, or half contemplated, reduction of the franchise to an 8*l.* rental, or a 6*l.* rating, would throw the representation of some towns into the hands of the lower orders, and would keep the greater part of the towns effectually out of their hands. The difference in the value of house-property in large towns and in small towns, it was urged, would render a nominally uniform qualification practically very different, in different towns. House-rent, it was said, is highest in the large boroughs, where the working classes for the most part live: you may safely, therefore, lower the qualification to a point which will include the working classes in them, without being afraid that you will at the same time include them elsewhere. The answer to this is Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's phrase, "Prove your case." There is no doubt of the general fact that house-rent is higher in large towns than in small, and that the same qualification in figures does not represent the same precise *status* in the two. The constituency of the Tower Hamlets is certainly of a lower grade than that of a country town. But what the exact effect of any proposed reduction in the franchise qualification will be in the two respectively is a fact which can only be determined by inquiry. We do not *know* that a reduction to 8*l.* rental would any where include the characteristic part of the lower classes. Many of the best-informed persons deny that it will include more than some of the richest of them. Very few persons venture to say it will include a sufficient number to give them the command of a constituency.

It is quite necessary that we should not in such a matter decide hastily, or without the requisite information. If it were not a party question, or at least a constitutional question, there would be no chance of our so determining it. If it were a point of criminal legislation, or of social improvement, we should at once set to work to accumulate statistical *data;* we should combine them into elaborate tables; we should argue on them till competent inquirers were agreed upon all ascertainable facts. Why should we decide with inferior *data* on an essential element in our permanent constitution? Why should we then, and then only, act upon unproved presumptions?

The dangers of lowering the borough franchise have been often spoken of, and are well known. The greatest of these is the danger of the precedent: if we diminish the criterion from 10*l.* to 8*l.* this year, we may be obliged to lower it from 8*l.* to 6*l.* a year or so hence. We have begun to move down a de-

Digitized by Google

clivity, and we shall be puzzled to pause. But this danger of the future is not the only one. The evident evil of the present change is great. The reduction to 6*l.* rating, or 8*l.* rental, will not include the working classes probably in most boroughs, if it will include them in any; but it will reach a class which is not very fit for the franchise. The lowest part of the middle class are as uninstructed as the best of the lower, are much more straitened in their circumstances, and much less independent in their spirit. We do not know the whole effect of the diminution now proposed, but we may be certain that it will include in the ordinary country towns very many of the corruptible and the dependent. The worst of the middle class are intrinsically less desirable voters than the best of the lower; and the only reason for including one and not the other is, that the introduction of a few of the working class into the constituency of any town is likely, if any thing is likely, to excite the jealousy of the rest of that class. There is less danger in admitting a class with whom most persons who live by wages are not accustomed to compare themselves so immediately. Still the evil of adding to *all* the town contituencies a very imperfectly prepared class is certain and considerable.

We do not say that if it were shown that the contemplated reduction would give us a few members for the working classes, and a few only, it would be unadvisable to make that reduction; on the contrary, the effect of it would be so like that of the plan we ventured to suggest in our last Number, that we should perhaps be ready—if there were a strong feeling in favour of that reduction—to run the risks which have been pointed out. But we must be quite sure that by running the risk we shall obtain what we wish. At present the danger is certain, and the advantage dubious. We should ascertain the facts of the case before we listen to the course proposed to us.*

We cannot mention at the length we should have wished the other conclusions which have been generally admitted by both Liberals and Conservatives during the late debate; but we may enumerate those that follow. The utility of the smaller boroughs, when untainted; the necessity of liberalising the county constituencies; the propriety of strengthening the present representation of the progressive part of the country,—these three principles are in some sort sanctioned by the measure of Lord Derby and the speeches which have been made in support of

* In the event of its being proved that in certain of our very largest towns the representation of the working classes would be ensured by an 8*l.* franchise, we would suggest that the members for such towns should be as many as three, and the "minority principle," in some one of its forms, should be introduced there likewise. This would give two members to the lower orders, and one to the higher.

Digitized by Google

it; and they have been all of them recognised, more or less, by the leaders of the Liberal opposition.

We may also remark, as a most hopeful indication of the future course of Reform, that the Liberal party have pledged themselves to the principle of *variety* of suffrage qualification. Before the late debate they were half-pledged to the contrary by the Act of 1832; but now they are so no longer, their leaders have given a distinct adhesion to the opposite principle. We need not observe that the opinions of Reformers on Reform are particularly important. The Conservatives are pretty sure to let us keep what we have; if the innovating party is imbued with right principles, we need not fear any dangerous alteration in the present system of representation. What we have is tolerable; if those who endeavour to make it better know how, we may hope that it will be made better.

For these reasons, therefore, we are disposed to think that the course which the present discussion has taken is, on the whole, good. It is better than we had anticipated. But does this improvement in the tone of discussion make it probable that a good measure will be passed? We reply, that if we can have a little delay we shall, we believe, obtain a good measure, but that if there is no delay, much of what will be passed will be passed in uncertainty, and may probably be dangerous.

Lord Melbourne used to say that the only thing which thoroughly frightened him was the phrase, "*something* must be done." He thought that in that vague state of mind people generally did what was wrong. The Reform question is exactly in a state to exemplify the truth of the remark. A great many people, from questionable motives, wish to "huddle up" the question; a great many more are frightened by Mr. Bright, and will consent to any thing in order that agitation on the subject for a time may cease.

But what probability is there of really staying agitation except by a good measure,—by a measure which may be defended upon principle? We allow that agitation on the subject may rest for a year or two; for a few years,—a great space in the lives of old politicians,—it may be stayed; but what is that in the life of a nation? The last of the statesmen of 1832 may probably pass off the scene before we have a Reform agitation number three; but the danger to England will be the same notwithstanding. When, indeed, is agitation so little likely to be successful in rousing a democratic cry as now? We know that it is most difficult to do so just at present. A most able agitator has tried to rouse one, and has failed. The immediate prospects of the country are excellent. Trade is steady and improving; industry is profitable; every body is contented that ever will be

Digitized by Google

contented. If we are to have agitation, do not let us postpone it to a distant future, when disaffection may be loud, and industry unrewarded, and good sense puzzled, and misery maddened. If we are to have monster meetings on the subject, let them be meetings of well-fed men. If a future agitation should fall on a time of suffering and depression, we cannot tell what the effect may be. So far from the terror of agitation inclining us to accept a hasty measure, we think the danger of a future agitation at a less satisfactory time one of the principal reasons for pausing now.

We do not believe that Mr. Bright would have greater success in a democratic tour this autumn than he had during the last. We believe he would have less. He will be less of a novelty. A generation had grown up which hardly remembered even the days of the League, to whom agitation was an attraction of itself. The gloss of novelty, at any rate, has been worn off now. Mr. Bright's friends will get tired of the subject, as other people are tired of it. And this is the more likely, because he has but few friends. What a contrast is his present following to that of the Anti-Corn-Law League! He may fill rooms as large; he may have a few audiences as "respectable" to listen to his orations. Idle people must be somewhere. But where are the large subscriptions, the disciplined organisations, the *air of business*, which were observable fourteen years ago? Every body knows now that Mr. Bright's oratory is a personal display, a fine exhibition of a peculiar mind; but of those who listen to him how many agree with him? How many will continue to listen to him if he continue to speak for a year or two?

In the Free-Trade struggle, too, the intelligence of the country was on the side of the agitators; but is that the case now? Can even the most prejudiced person deny that the real intelligence of the country is decidedly opposed to them? The more the subject is discussed, the more this will be apparent; and the more it is apparent the better. The only people who will gain by a hasty settlement of the question are those interested in the corrupt boroughs and the nomination-boroughs, which may thus escape for some short time the ruin which is sooner or later to involve them.

If, on the other hand, a hasty measure is now put together in a hurry, the education of the public mind on the subject will be stopped. We shall have no further accumulation of facts, no more reasonings, no more real reflection on the matter for some years. When the next agitation begins, we shall have again to learn the lesson we have just learned now; and we shall probably, as we have said, do so under circumstances much less favourable.

Digitized by Google

We therefore believe that we shall obtain a good measure of Parliamentary Reform if we can but gain a little delay; and in spite of the concurrence of the wishes of the interested and the fears of the timid, we hope that this delay may be conceded to us.

Digitized by Google

BOOKS OF THE QUARTER SUITABLE FOR READING-SOCIETIES.

Canterbury Sermons. By the Rev. A. P. Stanley. Murray.

Lectures on Metaphysics. By Sir William Hamilton, Bart. Edited by the Rev. H. L. Mansel, B.D., and John Veitch, M.A. 2 vols. Blackwood.

[These volumes will prove more acceptable to general students of mental science than any other of the learned author's writings. The very fact that they were not duly elaborated by himself for the press, the variety and range of subject, and the popular treatment of lectures intended for class-delivery, render them more suitable for ordinary apprehension.]

On Liberty. By John Stuart Mill. J. W. Parker.

[Reviewed in Article V.]

Christianity in India. By John William Kaye. Smith, Elder, and Co.

Logic in Theology, and other Essays. By Isaac Taylor. Bell and Daldy.

[This is a very slight volume, of which the essays likely to attract most interest are only reprints. The second essay, which in its original form was confessedly incomplete and prefatory, has not been, as it ought to have been, completed before republication.]

Social Innovators and their Schemes. By W. L. Sargant. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[Noticed in Article III.]

Man and his Dwelling-place: an Essay towards the Interpretation of Nature. J. W. Parker.

[A thoughtful book.]

M. Guizot's Memoirs of his own Time. Vol. II. Bentley.

The Duke of Buckingham's Memoirs of the Court of George IV., from original Family Documents. 2 vols. Hurst and Blackett.

A Popular History of the United States. By Mary Howitt. 2 vols. Longmans.

[A useful and well-written compendium of popular history.]

Digitized by Google

The Marquis Cornwallis's Correspondence, relating chiefly to India. From Family Papers. Edited by Charles Ross, Esq. 3 vols. Murray.

Memoirs of the Duchess of Orleans. Jeffs.

Walpole's Latest Journals, continuing and concluding Walpole's Memoirs of the Reign of George III. Edited by Dr. Doran. Bentley.

[A very amusing book. These volumes, like Walpole's other journals, contain a very graphic picture of the times in which he lived.]

Life of Charles James Fox. By Lord John Russell. Bentley.

A Decade of Italian Women. By Thomas Adolphus Trollope. 2 vols. Chapman and Hall.

History of the Kingdom of Naples, 1734-1825. By General Pietro Coletta. Translated from the Italian by S. Horner, with a Supplementary Chapter, 1825-1856. 2 vols. Hamilton, Adams, and Co.

History of France, from the earliest Times to 1848. By the Rev. James White. Blackwood.

[An excellent and comprehensive compendium of French history, quite above the standard of a school-book, and particularly well adapted for the libraries of literary institutions.]

Endowed Schools of Ireland. By Harriet Martineau. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[A very useful little political treatise on the Irish endowed schools, consisting of papers reprinted from the *Daily News*.]

Painting popularly explained. By T. J. Gullick and John Timbs. Kent and Co.

Religious Art in Italy. By Athanase Coqueril, jun. Translated from the French by Edward and Emily Higginson. Whitfield.

A Diary. By Sydney Lady Morgan. Bentley.

[Very amusing, in spite of its somewhat strained liveliness.]

Bartholomew Fair. By Henry Morley. Chapman and Hall.

[Reviewed in Article VI.]

Lectures on Geology. By Hugh Miller. Chapman and Hall.

Classic Records. Being the tenth volume of the Works of Thomas De Quincey. Hogg and Co.

Sketches of and from Jean Paul Richter. A. W. Bennett.

Poems and Ballads of Goethe. By W. Edmonstoune Aytoun and Theodore Martin. Blackwood.

[These are the best translations from Goethe we have ever seen. Mr. Martin's especially are graceful and true.]

Digitized by Google

The Iliad of Homer. By I. C. Wright, M.A. Macmillan and Co.

Poems by the Author of "Uriel." John Chapman.

The Wanderer. By Owen Meredith. Chapman and Hall.

Victoria in 1858. By W. Kelly. 2 vols. Chapman and Hall.

Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of British North America. By Paul Kane. Longmans.

Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India. Being Extracts from the Letters of Major Hodson. J. W. Parker.

Palestine, Past and Present. By Rev. H. S. Osborne. Trübner.

Residence in Palestine. By T. C. Thomson. 2 vols. Trübner.

The Book of the Thames. By Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall. Hall, Virtue, and Co.

[A richly and skilfully illustrated book.]

Roadside Sketches. By three Travellers. Bell and Daldy.

New Zealand and its Colonisation. By William Swainson. With a Map. Smith, Elder, and Co.

A Lady's Escape from Gwalior, and Life in the Fort of Agra. By R. M. Coopland. Smith, Elder, and Co.

Lost and Won. By Georgiana M. Craik. Smith, Elder, and Co.

[Of the spasmodic school.]

Poplar House Academy. By the Author of "Mary Powell." 2 vols. Hall, Virtue, and Co.

[A skilful, pleasant, and unpretending tale.]

The Bertrams: a Novel. By Anthony Trollope. Chapman and Hall.

[In its leading characters this novel shows greater breadth and depth of imaginative power than any other of Mr. Trollope's works; but it is perhaps even more eked out with extraneous matter than "The Three Clerks." The humour is, of course, broad and happy.]

Adam Bede. By the Rev. George Eliot. 3 vols. Blackwood.

[This book evinces a deeper and wider genius than any novel we have read for years. With a delicacy of touch in the quiet descriptions that often reminds us of Goethe, and great masculine vigour of imagination, the author combines a range of observation, an insight into character, and a humorous power, which render his production a really lasting work of art.]

Digitized by Google

LONDON:
PRINTED BY LEVEY, ROBSON, AND FRANKLYN,
Great New Street and Fetter Lane.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google